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PASTORAL REMINISCENCES;

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BY

SHEPARD K. KOLLOCK,

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION,

BY

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PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, AT PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

"I would not escape from memory's land
For all that eye can view;
For there's dearer dust in memory's land
Than the ore of rich Peru;
I clasp the fetter by memory twined,
The wanderer's heart and soul to bind."

MISS HOLFORD.

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INTRODUCTION.

There is a striking analogy between the office of a pastor and that of a physician. They both have respect to the welfare of men; and while the one seeks to heal the diseases of the body, the other aims at restoring to health the disordered souls of men. It belongs to each, not only to cure, but to prevent diseases; and to soothe and comfort such patients as it may be found impossible to cure. As the physician cannot safely follow his profession without an accurate knowledge of the human frame, so the pastor ought to be well acquainted with the constitution of the mind, and with all its faculties, susceptibilities and passions. And as the body and mind are intimately but mysteriously united, it appertains to both these professions to be acquainted with the effects of this union in their reciprocal influence on the constituent parts of our nature; therefore the knowledge of physiology is important to both. I have often been struck with admiration at the ardour and self-denial manifested by the students of medicine, in acquiring the requisite knowledge of the anatomy of the human body,

and in making themselves acquainted with the pathology of the most loathsome diseases. They learn to enter cheerfully into the wards of hospitals, almshouses, and asylums for the insane, that they may become acquainted with the symptoms of all classes of disease to which the human frame is liable; and they spare no pains in making experiments, and ascertaining the efficacy of particular remedies and modes of treatment. And I have desired to witness something of the same diligence and self-denial in candidates for the holy ministry, that they might become better qualified to deal with the moral diseases of those souls which are committed to their care. Every pastor should study to become a skilful casuist; for if he is a faithful shepherd, he will meet with a great number and variety of cases of conscience, which will call for both his tenderest compassion and spiritual skill, in the treatment. Well authenticated cases of particular diseases, and an account of the method of treatment which has proved successful, are justly held to be highly valuable, especially to the young physician; because, as yet, his own experience is too small to guide him to a judicious practice; and it is always found unsafe to trust to mere theory. And I am certain that young clergymen stand in as much need of such helps as the young physician. I have often pitied the condition of a young pastor, when he first takes upon him the care of souls, and has devolved upon

him the duty of a spiritual physician to a large number of immortals; whose everlasting welfare may depend very much on the treatment which they receive from their spiritual physician. It is, therefore, exceedingly important that pastors should avail themselves of every opportunity to maket hemselves acquainted with *casuistical* theology; and after conversation with experienced Christians and exercised souls, on experimental religion, there is no better means than a faithful report of cases which have actually occurred in the experience of pious and faithful pastors. On this account, I greatly approve the design of the Rev. S. K. Kollock, to publish a volume of "PASTORAL REMINISCENCES," or a detailed account of certain interesting cases of experience which occurred, and of which he was a witness, while a pastor of a Christian church. Several of these I have had the opportunity of seeing in manuscript; and cannot but think that their publication will be attended with beneficial effects to many. With the case of the poor widow, who died so triumphant a death, I was particularly interested.

Her religion, in my judgment, was of the right kind; its chief characteristics were, strong faith, pure love, deep humility, and entire resignation to the will of God. Her pastor, at her bedside, was rather a learner than a teacher; and there is no place on earth where instruction can be more effectually obtained, than at the dying

bed of such a saint. I was particularly struck with the account which she gave to her pastor, in answer to his inquiry, of the way by which she obtained and preserved that strong assurance of the favour of God, which she habitually enjoyed. It was not by poring over her past experience, but by *direct acts of faith* on the Son of God, and steady reliance on his all-sufficient righteousness.

I have also perused with much satisfaction, the narrative of the conviction and conversion of the sea-captain; and with the scriptural and judicious method of the pastor in answering his objections, and opening up to him the plan of God's mercy, and exhibiting clearly before him the riches of Divine grace, and the absolute freeness of the blessings of the everlasting gospel. This narrative, I am of opinion, will be very serviceable to young ministers, when called to direct anxious, inquiring souls, in the way of salvation. And as the exercises of this seaman were very similar to those of other convinced sinners, the method pursued so successfully in dealing with him, will be found well adapted to other cases.

As two of the narratives of this volume relate to seamen, it is to be hoped that it will circulate among this class of people, and be useful to many, both as containing an awful warning from the example of the "NAVAL APOSTATE;" and great encouragement from that case of conversion which was proved to be genuine by the fruits of holiness which ensued. The theological senti-

ments of the author appear to me to be uniformly sound and evangelical; and I am persuaded that there is nothing in the volume which will be found offensive to any real Christian of any denomination; and I shall be disappointed if the book does not meet with a ready sale and general approbation.

Mr. Kollock never manifests any ambition to say *fine things;* but his style is always plain and perspicuous, and at the same time, neat and correct.

Upon the whole, I consider this volume a real accession to our stock of religious reading; and I do cordially recommend it to the attention and careful perusal of all into whose hands it may come; and especially, to young pastors, and candidates for the ministry.

PREFACE.

"Of joys departed, never to return,
How bitter's the remembrance!"

YET there is mingled with that bitterness a sweetness which makes the cup palatable, and even creates a desire to drink it. Who would forget the past? Who would drive from his recollection departed friends, and cease to hail them in his memory, connected as they are with some of the dearest scenes that ever occurred? We are so constituted as to need this power, and could not be happy unless we added to the contemplation of things present the fruitful sources of recollection. Memory, "with all its busy train," continually retraces departed events, restores an ideal reality to things which are gone, makes them live again in revived imagery, and causes them to be seen and heard with renewed emotions. —The Christian may experience much profit and delight in calling back to his mind the transactions in which he once took a part; in recollecting past conversations and intercourse with beloved friends; and while indulging a confident hope that what Divine grace effected for others

can be done for himself, may find memory a sanctified instrument of spiritual improvement.

The following narratives, *substantially* authentic, are partly the effect of recollection, and partly of notes taken at the time of recurrence, when the impressions, new and vivid, were committed to writing.—No truths have so much power as those which we have acquired by *experience;* there is in them a mingling of sensation and emotion with fact and reasoning, which seems to throw us completely under the control of the lessons which are inculcated by our feelings as well as our understandings. Hence may arise the superior influence of those instructions which are presented in the style of narratives; they introduce the reader into the midst of the events that are related, make him a participator in the living scene, and produce a stronger and more lasting impression on his mind and memory than abstract rules, or mere lectures upon morals.—When these narratives are circumstantially true, portraying things and characters as they really existed, they instruct by telling what may actually be done, and what should be faithfully imitated.

Such is the nature of the following "Pastoral Reminiscences"—designed to inculcate lessons that are useful—to teach what we are—what we may be—what we ought to be—what we should do, suffer, and experience in the Christian life.—In reviewing these records of memory, I rejoice to find that so much is said of our adorable Re-

deemer, the fulness of his grace, and the plenteousness of his redemption; that all the duties and blessings of religion are represented as centering in him; that an experimental knowledge of his character, and strong faith in his righteousness are exhibited as tending to the suppression of all ungodliness, the practice of every virtue, and the possession of the richest privileges.—I am more and more convinced that for want of clear views on this subject, and unshaken confidence in the Saviour, so many are subject to the restraints of religion, and yet have few, if any, of its enjoyments; publicly profess the name of Christ, and yet are so little useful to others. It must glorify God and benefit men if any are effectually persuaded to "look unto Jesus," in every enjoyment, every tribulation, every temptation, every defect and infirmity; to view him continually as the only "way" to holiness; the only "door" to the abodes of bliss.—These endeavours will be regarded as happily employed, if they throw light upon any dim apprehension, establish any wavering faith, or comfort any afflicted conscience.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEVOUT WIDOW.

"Now, see the saint immortal: her I mean
Who lived as such; whose heart, full bent on heaven,
Leaned all that way, her bias to the stars.
Observe the awful portrait, and admire;
Nor stop at wonder: imitate and live."

THE promises of God to those who are deprived of earthly protectors, are peculiarly tender, and are often repeated in the pages of inspiration. He sees their helpless condition, and glorifies his name in saving them—perceives that they are in a land where snares encompass them, and "guides them by his eye," knows the selfishness of men, and interposes as the friend of the friendless. There is no burden that oppresses their hearts, no regret for the past, no anxious fear for the future, which is not met by some soothing word of consolation. Sometimes they find themselves sheltered from the blasts of adversity; but if they continue to "eat the bread of affliction," and endure severe sorrows, they see, by the eye of faith, that their Heavenly Father has purposes of mercy in these chastisements; they testify how much sweetness can be enjoyed in the midst of trouble, and hence the closeness of their walk with God is connected with their sufferings.

The following narrative relates to one of these children

of adversity who kissed the rod that smote her, and grew in grace under every stroke. She was led by the hand of the Lord; and led, not in easy and pleasant paths, but, for a while, through a rugged and thorny wilderness, where her strength must have failed, had not His mercy given her support. The faithfulness of God in being to her "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," affords encouragement for steadfast hope and earnest prayer to those who are oppressed and heavy laden; while her cheerful obedience to his will presents a clear evidence of the inseparable connexion between faith and holiness, and of the simplicity of character which a real love to Christ transfuses into the soul.

When in the year 18— I took charge of the congregation of N——, and was for the first time visiting them, accompanied by an elder, he said to me, after we had called upon several others, "now we will go and see Mrs. F——. She is in an humble situation, but is very much esteemed by the pious among us, and indeed is regarded as one of our best members." We went to the cottage which she occupied; it was small and plain, but everything wore the aspect of neatness and order; it seemed a fit residence for piety, peace, and contentment. Its inmate I found to be a widow advanced in years, with an aspect and address highly pleasing. I was at once struck with her countenance, bearing the marks of intelligence united with seriousness, and of benevolence mingled with devotion. After an introduction, she said to me, "I am glad to see you as a pastor whom a kind Providence has sent to us; and we will endeavor to hold up your hands by our prayers." We spent a little time in general conversation with her—conversation cheerful

and pleasant, with which religion was easily intermingled, and then terminated the interview with social prayer.

On my return home, I was not a little affected by the review of this visit, and wondered not that she was so beloved by the pious; that she was such a favorite with the pastors who had preceded me; and that, from further inquiries which I made, there were so many testimonials of the peculiar excellencies of her Christian character. I thought that she would be a blessing to me in my ministry; a comfort in my sorrows; a stimulus to activity in my labors—all which was realized by my further acquaintance with her, and the subsequent events that occurred.

I learned that she was born in a neighbouring county, and of respectable family, and was early married to a man who, at first industrious and moral, promised to be a comfort to her. But like too many others, he at times tasted the intoxicating cup, and at last so habitually indulged in it, that he became a confirmed inebriate. For years she suffered from his neglect and cruelty, and at length was left a widow, reduced to utter poverty. These afflictions were the means which God seemed to employ to bring her to himself. When his chastening hand was laid on her; when that which she was wont to esteem the spring of her highest happiness was made the source of her severest anguish, she felt the need of more than human power to sustain her; she went to the Scriptures to learn consolation; to a throne of grace to receive mercy; and by such means was gradually brought to a saving knowledge of the Saviour.

How many, like her, begin their acquaintance with

God and the Redeemer in the season of affliction! how often is it the furnace in which Christ forms the most "excellent vessels of honor and praise!" It was not until Manasseh was in affliction, that "he humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to him:" it was not until the Prodigal was in affliction that he resolved to return unto his Father's house: "Behold, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."

When thus left a widow indeed, she came to the borough of N—— to endeavour to support herself by her needle; there she made a public profession of religion, forming one of that little band that constituted an infant church which was then organized. In that connexion, she had remained until I saw her, viewing many changes, passing through the ministry of several pastors, and silently and obscurely, yet effectually, doing much to promote their usefulness.

From the time of my first acquaintance until her removal from the world, scarcely a week passed without my visiting her; an intercourse which I now recal with pleasure as a high privilege, when my visits were made, not so much to give as to receive instruction, not so much to impart as to obtain comfort.

Such a privilege the pious and devout members of the church also enjoyed. The gay and the worldly never went to her cottage; the mere professor of religion, who had only "the form of godliness," knew her only as a communicant whom they saw at the Lord's table; but the "spiritually minded," those who had "like precious faith," and like her had "tasted that the Lord was gracious," valued her conversation, prized her prayers, and highly esteemed her Christian friendship.

It might seem that such attention from some who were superiors to her in worldly prosperity and education, and moved in a higher rank of life, would have inflated her with self-sufficiency and pride. But nothing of that kind was apparent in her conduct—on the contrary, if any ever ventured to speak of her attainments in religion, they always experienced a decided rebuke; of her deficiencies in fulfilling her duty she was deeply sensible; to her Divine Saviour she gave the whole glory of her salvation.

She had a good understanding, which grace had improved, and had read but few books besides her Bible, but that she had studied with diligence and prayer. Especially was she taught by the Holy Spirit, and had so much experience of the Christian life through a long succession of trials and afflictions, that she was well qualified to instruct, comfort, and sustain.

Her piety was in a peculiar manner *cheerful;* making her happy as well as holy. Happiness, we know, arises not so much from *possessions* as from *dispositions;* not so much from what a man *has*, as from what he *is*. The saint whose character we are contemplating had no "possessions"—nothing of what "the world calls good and great;" but she had eminently a Christian disposition, and that was the source of much solid and rational happiness. By subduing all envy, discontent, and selfishness, and assiduously cultivating the graces of the Spirit, she found springs of pleasure opened in herself—she learned that happiness was connected with a moral temper, and not to be sought for so much by any thing without. She allured others to piety by showing that its path is the path of peace; by taking pleasure in all that

is innocently pleasant; by enjoying whatever is purely delightful; by the habitual exercise of contentment with her lot. She used to say, "we talk sometimes of the greatest evils that may come on us, and enquire, what are the severest that may befal us; but I think that the very greatest affliction that could be sent, is to be given up to a murmuring spirit; that will make one wretched in the midst of the greatest abundance. It is a reason why we should guard against a complaining and discontented disposition; why we should strive as much to be cheerful as to be watchful and prayerful. God designs us to be happy, and cannot approve of any thing but what has a tendency to make us so."

Such being her uniform disposition and conduct, it is to be expected that she had, in a high degree, *trust and confidence in God.* She had found him in her severest troubles her refuge and strength, and she was sure that he would be so in time to come. She used to say, "God never takes any thing from his people, but he gives them something better instead of it: he has kindly taken many things from me, and has given me *himself*, infinitely better than all worldly prosperity." The sense which she had of God's covenant and perfections was such as led her implicitly to trust in him for all that she wanted; she seemed, in the exercise of a firm faith, to give up all her concerns into his hand; to see him in every thing, to find him in her heart, and to have no design in the world but of living to his will, and no expectation of enjoyment but in communion with him.

Her *views of Jesus Christ* were clear and distinct; her faith strong and appropriate; her reliance upon him entire and undivided. This was a frequent topic of her

conversation; she often said that if Christians were to think more of Christ, trust more to him, make more mention of him in prayer, and study more diligently his words, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," they would make greater attainments in piety. To consider him as dying *in her stead;* to regard his righteousness as *her* righteousness, afforded her the highest delight. Such views of the plan of salvation, such determination to know nothing, to desire nothing, to depend on nothing but "Jesus Christ and him crucified," gave her soul peace, and animated her in the service of her Lord and Master.

With such apprehension of the Saviour, it is not wonderful that she enjoyed *uniform assurance.* I once ventured to ask her experience on this subject, and enquired whether she habitually enjoyed this privilege. She replied to me at some length. "Some years ago, I suffered much from doubts and fears. On one occasion, I was for days under the most distressing darkness; my hope of salvation departed; I was persuaded that I had deceived myself; I had only an awful sense of my sins and no views of God's mercy or Christ's grace; I prayed and wept, searched the Scripture, and meditated on its contents, but all in vain; in the day I was sorrowful, at night I wet my couch with tears, and was ready to despair, and to give up all expectation of ever being saved. One morning, after a night of restlessness and anguish, I went to the Scripture, and during the reading of the fourteenth chapter of John, light broke into my mind, and dissipated all my darkness; my doubts vanished, and under a lively apprehension of the character of Christ, I had peace and joy in believing. You may sup-

pose that *that* is to me a precious part of the word of God; and I wish, my pastor, if you are called to preach my funeral sermon, to take as your text the second and third verses of that chapter: 'In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.' That memorable period I often look back upon as the time when the Lord 'brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God;' and ever since I have been freed from spiritual darkness and perplexing fears. 'Tis true, I have had seasons of doubt and uncertainty, temptations to which all God's people are at times subject, but they have continued only for a short time; uniform assurance has for many years been the experience of my soul, liable, I confess, to occasional assaults both of outward temptations and inward corruptions. But this assurance is derived from the exercise of strong faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has fulfilled righteousness in my stead, and purchased for my soul reconciliation and grace; who is my treasure, which I appropriate for my use, and by which I am enriched; the balm of Gilead which I apply for the recovery of my soul, and by which I am healed; the living waters to which I come to refresh my spirits and quench my thirst for holiness and happiness; the garment which I put on, and wear to cover my destitution, and beautify my deformity. When I look to myself, I can have no assurance; a view of my defective services, inward corruptions, and languid graces gives no confident hope; it is only when I look off from myself to Christ, that I can have any persuasion of God's present favour, or my own

final happiness. It was, I think, to drive me entirely from myself that God permitted that horrible darkness to which I have alluded; to lead me for ever to renounce all dependence upon my feelings, my knowledge, or my duties. And it was by the Holy Spirit bringing Christ and his righteousness nigh to me, in his precious promises, that my darkness was removed. I can now say, Christ has given himself as my covenant surety; I take him at his word, and therefore he and all his merits are mine; I appropriate him to myself as my high-priest, my prophet, and my king. To do this constantly; to be persuaded that he bought me with his blood; that he is *my* God, and will exert all his perfections for my good—this, as far as my experience testifies, is the direct, the compendious, the certain method of obtaining assurance: any other must necessarily be feeble, and liable to be unsettled by daily temptation, or destroyed by the rising of indwelling sin."

After this interview, I left her comforted and benefitted; resolved to think more of Christ for my own encouragement, and to preach him more for the benefit of others. How true it is that "the just," the righteous in Christ Jesus, "live," thrive in comfort, and flourish in holiness, not by reflecting on their own sanctification, on viewing their own attainments, but "by faith;" a fresh, repeated, daily, never-ceasing exercise of faith upon the Son of God. This is the most effectual way of feeding the lamp of piety, and quickening the flame of holiness.

Love for the cause of Christ, a desire to promote its interests, and an anxious concern for the salvation of others, were conspicuously exhibited in her whose char-

acter we are considering. Those who often visited her can testify how much she was interested in the prosperity of the church to which she belonged; what stress she laid upon Christian fellowship; how she endeavoured to promote it among the members; how she aided her pastor in his efforts to do good; and how she daily employed every means in her power for the salvation of others. I may say, without exaggeration, that she was always doing something to raise the piety of others, and to fan the flame of their divine love; that, lively and active in her religion, she was insensibly a blessing to the little circle in which she moved; that by her prayers and conversation she kept up a spiritual atmosphere around her, and made it genial and reviving. In her endeavours for the conversion of her unrenewed friends, she was judicious, and in many cases successful; with some she could use no other means but the silent influence of her holy example; others she could instruct, admonish, and warn; but always did it with discretion, choosing the best time, and the best circumstances, employing the meekness of wisdom and the tenderness of love. Several, who under my ministry joined the church, were indebted, under God, to this "mother of Israel" for their first religious impressions. Some of her immediate neighbours enjoyed, in a high degree, the influence of her example and her prayers. They had been most kind in "ministering to her in carnal things;" and she, with overflowing gratitude, abundantly "ministered to them in spiritual things;" and so lovingly and prayerfully insinuated religion into their minds, that they were scarcely aware of it. They survived her for some years to show by their piety the influence which such intercourse had pro-

duced, and dying in faith, rejoined her in the mansions of peace.

A *devotional spirit* was possessed, in an eminent degree, by our pious friend. Considering what firm belief she had in the providence of God, what a deep sense of her entire dependence on him, what a strong conviction that all her "springs were in him," it was to be expected that she would often say with David, "On thee do I wait all the day." Considering what spiritual mindedness was observed in her, what a strong and constant bias she had towards Divine things, it was to be expected that she would be often with God, glancing towards him in a way of devotion, bespeaking his presence, calling for his help, begging the pity of his eye, imploring the relief of his hand, and petitioning for the pardon of her sins, and grace to sanctify and govern her heart. With those exalted views which she had of Christ, of which I have already spoken, it is not strange that she should have had a holy freedom and "boldness of access" to God through the Redeemer: that to the humility of the sinner she should have joined the liberty of the child; that to her Heavenly Parent she should have told all her desires freely and fully; and that such devotion should have heightened every enjoyment, mitigated every trial, given peace within, and spread cheerfulness and happiness without. Her prayers, I have reason to know, were often fervent, poured forth with that earnestness of spirit which well became the immensely rich blessings which she asked. I shall never forget the manner in which she once expressed it. At a time when the Spirit of God was poured out, and when an unusual number of persons joined the church, she was prevented by sickness from

coming to the communion; when I visited her on Monday, and described the scene, she said: "So young Mr. —— was among the number. O! I have been working" (probably having in view the apostle's expression, "*always labouring in prayers*")—"I have been working and working for that young man at a throne of grace for weeks, and months, and years; and blessed be God, my prayers are now answered." An instance of perseverance in prayer, well worthy of imitation. How much was I encouraged in all my duties, to know that one who had such "power with God," was daily pleading for me, and endeavouring to lead other Christians not to forget at the mercy-seat him "who had the rule over them."

For nearly four years I had the privilege of such intercourse with this devout believer, and of admiring that consistency of Christian character, which shone so brightly. At the end of that time, I had also the privilege to contemplate the termination of her profession on earth, and to see her "finishing her course with joy."

Though it is not the privilege of *all* God's children to enjoy large foretastes of glory in their last hours; though some have even departed under clouds of darkness and terror, yet generally those who live consistently, die comfortably. The lukewarm and irregular—those who suffer their graces to wither, who are too much attached to the world, who are not watchful and diligent, are generally left to disquietude and perturbation. But the believer who adorned his profession in life, usually enjoys peculiar supports when about leaving the world. It was so with her whose character we are considering; she who spent her days in faith and prayer, ended them in peace and comfort.

She was permitted to depart gradually, by a lingering decline; and thus had the opportunity of testing the value of her principles, and of showing her friends how a sincere, consistent, and exemplary Christian can die. In referring to the notes which were taken of her conduct and her expressions, I find that scarcely any thing can exceed the confidence, composure, serenity, and tenderness that appeared in all that she did and said. I cannot refrain from presenting some of her expressions, as exhibiting a glorious evidence of the reality of religion, and of the inworking of the mighty power of God.

When she was confined to her bed by sickness, and when it was uncertain how it would terminate, she expressed the most perfect willingness to leave the event entirely with God. Neither elated by hope, nor depressed by fear, she expressed a contentment to live, or a willingness to die, just as it seemed good in His sight. "He knows what is best for me; and after we have used all necessary means, we will leave the event to Him; He will in this do right; He will act wisely and kindly, and I must not, will not, be afraid."

As her sickness increased, my own visits and those of her pious friends were more frequent; and it was truly delightful to see the consolations with which she was favoured. When the word of God was read, his praises sung, and Christ made the theme of conversation, her countenance would change in a moment, however languishing she might be with weakness or racked with pain, from the expression of great suffering to a smile that seemed like a ray of the heavenly glory. All saw in her, patience under suffering, acquiescence in the Divine will, humbleness of mind, penitence at the foot of

the cross, and firm faith in the grace and atonement of the Redeemer.

When the physician expressed the opinion that her disease was beyond the power of medicine, and that she could not recover, I was deputed to communicate to her the intelligence; and though the office is often painful, yet, on this occasion, so far as the effect to be produced was considered, it was performed without reluctance. When it was told her, nature for a moment shuddered and shrunk back, but the perturbation was only momentary; soon recovering her calm and placid countenance, she said, "It is all well; the will of the Lord be done; I must now set my house in order; you know, my dear pastor, the text on which I wish my funeral sermon to be preached; that is all the direction which I need give *you*." After committing her to God in prayer as one who could not long remain upon earth, I left her, not however to the influence of fear, but to that of great tranquillity in view of her departure; to a calm composure, arising from an entire willingness to commit her spirit into the hands of the Redeemer.—She lived many days after this, retaining her speech and reason, and giving satisfactory evidence that God, listening to her breathings and cry, had drawn very near to her, and was a peculiar "help in time of trouble."

In view of the past, her sense of the Divine mercies was strong, and her feelings of gratitude ardent. "Truly goodness and mercy have followed me all my days; how can I sufficiently adore God for his blessings? He has led me on step by step through the wilderness; he has brought me to the gates of death; and now he will not leave me; he will be my companion through the dark valley."

Amidst sufferings the most awful, she would be not merely resigned, but so cheerful as to say that she could, if God were to help her, bear even more; that his supporting grace was wonderful, passing all expression.—I often asked her if she had any doubts of her acceptance, or any fears of the future? She would reply: "when I look at the deficiences of my life, or my corruption within, I am indeed distressed; but when I look to Christ as I should do, as I try to do, continually, I have no clouds nor fears. I know that my Redeemer liveth"—with that appropriating faith which she loved to exercise in life, she would repeat, "*my* Redeemer—*mine*—*mine*."

But that which most affected me, and which I have never seen equalled in the most triumphant death of the departing saint, was the spirit of devotion which she possessed and made known. For several days before her departure, she used, when I prayed with her, to continue the prayer, evidently without knowing that she was speaking aloud, or that she could be heard by others. And oh! what prayers! what holy thirstings after the presence of God! what ardent desires for perfect conformity to his will! what frequent mention of the name of Christ and of his righteousness as *her* righteousness! How her heart was penetrated with devotion, and holy confidence, and faith! How near she drew to God by the full assurance of the blood of her Redeemer; and how much of *his* spirit did she imbibe with whom she was so familiar; whom she so pre-eminently revered and loved! Sometimes the prayer was all thanksgiving for mercies—sometimes the mingling of humble confession with fervent petition—often it was forgetfulness of herself, and entire intercession for others—for her pastor

and his family—for her friends who had been kind to her, and whom she mentioned by name—for the church of which she was a member—for the cause of Christ in general. We felt, after hearing such prayers, that we were treading on holy ground; that the chamber of sickness was "none other than the gate of heaven;" that God was *specially* near to her, making his grace, amidst the decays of nature, most illustrious and triumphant; that her Saviour, who had granted her comfort under many troubles of life, had reserved the strongest and sweetest for the sorrows of death.

> "Oh! true and fervent are the prayers that breathe
> Forth from a lip that fades with coming death."

On the Saturday before her death, I visited her twice, as it was expected that she would depart on that day. I found her, though weak, able to converse a little, and to show that the nearer she came to death, the less gloomy was its effect; that the more closely she approached the world of glory, the more she was brought under its influence and impressions. I said to her, "to-morrow is the Sabbath; would it not be delightful to go home then? Would you not wish to depart on the Lord's day to the Lord's house above?" She whispered, "I have no wish; let God take me in his own time. Do you think that I would dictate to *him?* I never did it in health, and shall I do it now, when I am almost gone? Father, thy will be done—*thy* time—*thy* manner—*thy* way. Pray for me; pray that God would not leave me for a single moment."—It was the last interview which I had with her; the next day her body

"slept in Jesus," and her soul went to the joy of her Lord.

The funeral took place in the church, no private house being sufficient to accommodate the people. The number that attended was great; and they were almost without exception those of a devout and spiritual character—not merely the members of her own church, but Christians also of other denominations, who had been often benefitted by her example, conversation, and prayers, and who now wished to pay the last respect to her remains. The words which she herself had selected were the subject of the discourse; "in my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also;" words peculiarly appropriate for such an occasion; leading us to consider the condition of her who was taken from us; to reflect upon her spirit enjoying one of those mansions that was prepared for her; possessing perfect purity, complete knowledge, freedom from sorrow, the society of angels, and, above all, the enjoyment of the vision and likeness of God and the Redeemer. Considering how Christ had peculiarly honoured her, and how useful she had been in the station she had occupied, it would have been ungrateful to suffer her to drop into the dust without notice; her religious character was delineated; the circumstances of her death recounted; and she herself presented for the imitation of others, so far as she imitated Christ.

It was a season of solemnity and melting tenderness, when the church, though called to mourn, was encour-

aged and animated by the contemplation of one who, by her living labours and dying experience, had brought much glory to Christ.

When the service in the church was over, "devout persons," as was said of Stephen, "carried her to her burial;" and when the body was committed to the dust, sung the beautiful and appropriate hymn :-

"Why do we mourn departed friends,
Or shake at death's alarms;
'Tis but the voice that Jesus sends,
To call them to his arms."

A head-stone marks the spot where the body of this saint reposes, with the following inscription, illustrative of her character and end.

HERE LIES,

IN HOPE OF A JOYFUL RESURRECTION,

THE BODY

of

MRS. A——— F———,

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE IN THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH,

March 29, 18—, aged 63 years.

"*She walked with God, and is not, for God took her.*"

Those of her friends who still live, no doubt at times visit this humble grave, lying in a retired part of the cemetery; a position expressive of her meekness and humility; and while bending over the sacred dust, and recalling her holy life and happy death, breathe out the prayer, "let me die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like hers."

"There does the morn her earliest tears bestow,
There the first roses of the year do blow,
And angels, with their silver wings, o'ershade
The spot now sacred by her relics made."

The veil of separation is drawn for a season; she has departed, and no more will converse with us here: but she will be seen at the right hand of the Redeemer, when he comes to gather in his people; and will appear to his glory, a bright trophy of his rich grace.

This narrative suggests some useful instructions.

1. It teaches *what a privilege it is to a church to have an eminently pious member* like her whose life and death we have contemplated; one who walks with God, lives by faith, delights in prayer, enjoys the communion of saints, and seeks in every way to be useful. What encouragement does even one such give to the pastor; what strength to the weak, what comfort to the afflicted, what credit and reputation to the church, what new life to many that are "dead in trespasses and in sins." Such influence is felt, even though the subject of such piety be in obscure and humble circumstances; for among the poor we often view religion in its purest form; see the image of Christ visibly impressed upon the heart; behold a sincerity and simplicity of Christian character, unincumbered by those hinderances to spirituality which are too frequently in the way of those who live in ease, and walk in the higher ranks of life. Do we not among them learn the most valuable lessons of resignation and faith, and see the most striking demonstrations of the wisdom, power, and grace of God? They may sometimes be confined for months and years to the bed of languishment, and be deprived of the enjoyment of the

public means of grace; and yet in the vale of obscurity and poverty, be most useful by the prayers which they offer for their fellow Christians, and by the example which they exhibit of submission and meekness, contentment and joy. Often have I seen such cheerfully acquiescing in all that the Lord has done, acknowledging that it is good and right, and envying none their honours and riches; delighting themselves in God, reposing on the covenant of grace, exulting in the assurance of eternal glory, "drawing water out of the wells of salvation," and rendering the dark scene of penury and sorrow the means of displaying the beauties of the "sun of righteousness." How much is God glorified by this spirit, and saints benefitted by such a sight!—"I have left in the midst of thee a poor and an afflicted people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Yes! God has left them in the midst of us, as the objects of his *special* attention; Christ marks many of them as his own; he honoured poverty when he came into our world, grew up amidst its privations, drank its bitter cup, chose his apostles from those who had experienced its sorrows, and gathered his first followers from its sons and daughters; and when he adds to it his "unsearchable riches," and the promise of an "incorruptible inheritance," he strips it of its terrors, and invests it with a kind of endearing honour.—"Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of heaven?"—"O! God, thou hast prepared thy goodness for the poor."

2. In considering the Christian character of her who is presented to us in this narrative, we see the *practicability and necessity of high attainments in piety.*

We know that religion exists in various degrees, and that, according to the metaphors employed in Scripture, there is the "bud" and the "fruit;" the glimmering "spark," and the full "blaze;" the "babe in Christ," and the "full-grown man." But though all be not equally sanctified, yet all are bound to attain the highest religion of which their nature is capable. The subject of this narrative, we have seen, attained this eminent piety; she seemed to combine in her character all the Christian excellencies; to blend the dispositions which prepared her for heaven with those that fitted her for usefulness on earth; to exhibit the highest spirituality united with the purest moral virtue.—Let us, professors of religion, be "followers of those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises." If we would be happy and useful, let us seek after a higher degree of personal religion; let us pursue it with earnestness, diligence, and solicitude; let us resist the destructive influence of the world in every form; let us mortify all sin in the heart, and struggle after inward purity; let us be constrained by the love of Christ to be conformed to his example, and to have "fellowship with him in his sufferings."—"To be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace."

3. How desirable is *a happy and triumphant death.* Such a death she experienced whose character we have been contemplating. I know that it is not the privilege of all the children of God to enjoy so large a share of heaven upon earth as did this dear saint; to have such gleams of Divine glory to irradiate for them the dark valley; yet it should be desired and sought by us all. We should wish not only to live her holy life, but also

to die her happy death. When we consider how such a departure from earth glorifies God, brings honour to the Redeemer, credit to religion, and good to immortal souls; how it edifies the church, increases the faith of believers, impresses and awakens careless sinners, it should not be a subject of indifference whether our sun set in clouds or in brightness; it should be the object of our holy ambition to "finish our course with joy." How much benefit has been derived from the relation given of those whose dying experience corresponded with their living holiness, who, standing on the verge of heaven, exhibited some of the spirit of the glorified saints! How much good has been done by the perusal of the "closing hours of President Finley"—the last expressions of Toplady and Payson—the "Dying Thoughts of Richard Baxter;" and the experience of hundreds since, who had bright manifestations of God's presence in their passage to the tomb! Consistent and eminent piety in life is the most likely way of attaining peace and comfort in death; to "die daily," like the apostle, is the best means to be able, when death comes, as he did, to say, "I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

CHAPTER II.

THE SCOTTISH SEAMAN.

"I love the sailor;—his eventful life—
His generous spirit—his contempt of danger—
His firmness in the gale, the wreck, and strife;
And, though a wild and reckless ocean-ranger,
God grant he make that port, when life is o'er,
Where storms are hush'd, and billows break no more."

NEARLY eighteen hundred years were suffered to pass away before any effectual means were employed for the religious improvement of seamen. There was no good reason why they should have been so long neglected. They were not overlooked by the Redeemer; on the shores of Tiberias, he often wandered to gather the straying seamen to his arms; and from the watermen of the lake he selected the chief ministers of his kingdom, who, faithful to the trust reposed in them, endured all manner of hardships, and even sacrificed their lives for the extension of the gospel. Nothing but unbelief, looking at the difficulties attending their salvation, caused Christians thus to neglect them, and to suppose that there were almost impossibilities in the way of their conversion. These difficulties were indeed great. Whether this class of men were at sea or on shore, they were surrounded by a mass of corruption and sin which led them to lose sight of all moral obligation—at sea they had no

Sabbath nor Divine worship; nothing but what was calculated to demoralize their feelings, vitiate their habits, and to estrange them from God. On shore, that distinction of manner and dress which characterized them, kept them from the house of God and the public means of grace; temptations to vice everywhere presented themselves in forms adapted to their inclinations and habits; and no counsellor was at hand to interpose a word of caution and advice. Is it surprising that in such circumstances, so great a part of them were vicious, and almost sunk in the depths of ignorance and sin? But it is surprising that for so long a time they suffered from the neglect of the Christian community; and that no special pledge of mercy for them was sought for and found. While almost every other object on which Christian beneficence could expend its power was eagerly embraced, they, as if by common consent, were neglected and forgotten, and, as the consequence of this neglect, seemed utterly incorrigible. Possessed of immortality, and under the awful responsibility which is connected with it, they were ignorant almost of the fact that they had a soul; they possessed no book of God to enlighten them, no sanctuary to receive and instruct them, no friendly voice to warn them of their danger, no kind messenger to invite them to the Lamb of God; continually wafted from the shore of one land to another, they enjoyed the blessings of no country; exposed to death in its most appalling forms, they were entirely regardless of that Almighty Being who "holds the winds in his hand," and deplorably ignorant of his will, who "speaketh to them from heaven."

But brighter scenes at last arose. At the beginning

of this century, Christians awoke to their duty; they began to feel what they owe to these dying sinners; shed tears over their misery, extended their hand to pluck them from the gulf of destruction, and directed them to that haven, where storms are for ever over, and where the weary find eternal rest. The interest thus commenced advanced with wonderful rapidity; it was truly gratifying to see with what zeal the subject was taken hold of by Christians in every part of the world; and with what success the effort was attended. The Scriptures liberally diffused, are now received by seamen with grateful feeling; and few vessels leave port without copies of the word of God. Religious tracts are abundantly distributed; these winged messengers find their way to the hammock, and in an unlooked-for hour often reach the heart of the sailor. In many ports bethel meetings are held, and mariners' chapels erected. On the deck of many a ship, praises to God are sung, where formerly little was heard but horrid imprecations; sailor's boarding-houses, which were once dens of sin and blasphemy, have, by the grace of God, become houses of prayer. Many captains and mates, and not a few common sailors, have experienced the pardoning grace of the Redeemer, and are "the first fruits" of that "abundance of the sea that shall be converted unto God."

One of these converted seamen is the subject of this narrative, a bright trophy of the rich grace of God.

The event which I am about to relate took place at a time when unusual solemnity prevailed in the congregation over which I presided; when an impression not to be mistaken was made by the preaching of the Word, silent-

ly affecting many hearts. It was usual, when any number were supposed to be the subjects of the Spirit's awakening influences, to have what is termed a "meeting of inquiry" at my house, where such could assemble by themselves, and by familiar conversation receive counsel and direction. Such a meeting was announced every Sabbath, and all who were roused from their natural thoughtlessness, who were impressed more or less on the subject of religion, who were in any degree convicted of sin, or desirous of salvation, were invited to attend. As a church we derived much spiritual benefit from these meetings; they tended to give the pastor a knowledge of the numbers of those thus awakened; to deepen their impressions of Divine truth; to keep them from returning to their former carelessness; to preserve them from despair under the burden of their guilt, and to impart instruction in the way of salvation in a manner suited to their capacity, and applicable to each particular case.

It may be a question whether it is not desirable that such a meeting should be constantly held in congregations of any size, and announced on the Sabbath. This was the custom of the excellent Payson during the greater part of his ministerial life, and he attested that "it was exceedingly useful; the number of inquirers has often been very small, but we have always had some, and the number has increased or diminished as the church has been more or less engaged in prayer." Would it not have a happy influence upon the pastor, preserve his spirituality, strengthen his faith, and lead him to expect great and daily results from his daily labours? Would it not have a happy influence upon the church, quicken their devotion, inspire them with gratitude and faith if

many attended, or with humiliation if the meeting declined? Might it not, if properly conducted, be the means of a *perpetual* revival of that *continued* prosperity in the church which is far better than a temporary excitement, succeeded by a season of spiritual coldness and languor?

Such a meeting Matthew Henry seems to have had once a week, though confined to the young, in which there was usually "a competent number who manifested symptoms of thoughtfulness;" he "conversed with them on their everlasting interests; explained the nature of the covenant of grace, of which their baptism was the seal; illustrated the design of the Lord's Supper, and exhorted them to come to the Lord Jesus; in which labour of love he was remarkably successful." Such a meeting Baxter seems to have maintained regularly while he was at Kidderminster; some were always impressed by his preaching and concerned for their salvation whom he met once a week for Christian conversation; "or if through ignorance or bashfulness they could make no answers, it was all turned into instruction and exhortation." May not this, with the other means which he used with so much simplicity and intense ardour, have tended to that *continued* outpouring of the Spirit which was there enjoyed; that lively state of religion which was maintained without the intermission of apathy and inactivity; a state, during which he could say that in a church of six hundred communicants, there were only twelve of whose piety he had any reason to doubt.

It was while attending such a meeting that I became acquainted with Captain R. Among others who for the first time had come there, I perceived a man between

forty and fifty years of age, whom, from his complexion and dress, I recognized to be a seaman; he had listened attentively to the conversation around him, and exhibited much thought and feeling. Approaching him, I said: "My friend, you are a stranger here; do you know the nature of this meeting?"

"Yes, sir; I was at your church last Sunday and heard you preach, and when you announced this meeting, and invited all to come who were concerned for their souls, awakened to the importance of religion, and convinced that they were sinners, I thought that I belonged to that number. And when you *urged* such to come, telling them that you would be pleased to give them counsel and direction, that their attendance might strengthen their impressions, and prevent them from losing their convictions; and when you asked the members of the church to pray for such as might attend, I determined to go, and I am here this evening to tell you my desires and feelings."

Finding him modest and retiring, I drew him out by repeated inquiries. "In what capacity are you as a seaman, and what brought you to this port?"

"I am master of a ship that was driven here last week. We suffered everything but death on the coast during the late storm; lost all our rigging, and at last our rudder, and were sure that we should perish. After we had given up, saw our graves in the deep waters before us, and knew that we were not prepared for death, we began to pray, as well as we could, with all our might; and God saved us from destruction, and enabled us to reach this place, with the ship and our bodies almost torn to pieces."

"What! do you think that God hears the prayers of the wicked?"

"Yes; he heard our prayers—none but he could have saved us—he loves the poor sailors, wicked as they are."

"The Psalmist describes your condition: 'Then they cry unto the Lord in their troubles'"—he immediately added, "and bringeth them out of their distresses."

"Have you never before been in danger, and prayed to God to save you?"

"Yes, very often; and I am ashamed to think how ungrateful I have been to the Preserver of my life, and how frequently I have broken the most solemn promises. But I am different now from what I ever was before. We had scarcely got into port before the sailors who had prayed so much became as wicked as ever, and even the mate, who promised as much, and cried to Heaven as earnestly as I did, soon lost all remembrance of God's mercies, and his own vows; but my impressions, through Divine grace, have continued and increased. While engaged in work during the day, I am sad, and all suppose that it is owing to my losses, but it is caused by the remembrance of my sins, and my desire for pardon. I am glad when night comes; for then I can read a portion of Scripture, and pray to God for mercy."

"But what led you to go to church on the Sabbath."

"It was to learn whether there was any hope for me, a poor miserable sinner. I heard that there was such a church here, and that you were the minister; I had not listened to preaching for many, many years; God inclined me to go, and made that meeting, and I hope will make this, a blessing to my soul."

"You then feel yourself to be a sinner."

"I have long known it, but have never felt it so keenly as I do now; what I once regarded as trivial offences, I now see to be shocking crimes; I feel that my heart is wicked, and that all my actions are but streams from the corrupt fountain within; I have sinned against so many privileges that I am deeply sensible that I am a miserable creature and guilty criminal; that I am the chief of sinners."

"Do you deserve, then, to perish?"

"I cannot question it for a moment; if God should repulse and eternally destroy me, I dare not object, for I have no claim upon him; if I were never to taste of his mercy, I feel that I must acquit him of all severity; and that I am just as worthy of eternal death now, under conviction of sin, as I was in the depth of my carnal security."

I was gratified, and yet surprised at the manner in which he expressed himself on these subjects; and at the same time fully convinced that the impression of Divine truth upon his mind was strong, his sense of sin great, and his desire after salvation sincere and ardent. It would have been pleasant to ask him more questions, but the time would not permit. I therefore urged him to rely on the Lord Jesus, to turn his eye from his guilt to the cross, to view the richness, preciousness, and freeness of the gospel, and to believe that its declarations contain a sufficient warrant for the vilest sinner, in the most desperate circumstances, to look to Christ for relief.

At all our meetings during the remainder of the week, and on the following Sabbath, he was present, evincing marked attention, drinking in with eagerness the word of life, and receiving, with deep interest, the consolation

and instruction imparted to the convicted. At the next "meeting of inquiry," he was one of the first that was present, anxiously waiting to be instructed in the way of salvation. From what I had seen of him, I was persuaded that he was a man of good natural powers, much acuteness, and considerable knowledge of Scripture. Leaving the officers of the church to attend to the other inquirers, I determined to devote the evening to him, and at the same time to give to others who were sitting around an opportunity to listen to our conversation. Approaching, I asked the state of his mind.

"Since I was here the last week, I have conversed with no one on the subject of religion, but my Bible and my God. But one thing affects me, and makes me feel that I need more pungent convictions; I am distressed that I have no more fear of eternal perdition; I have really less dread of it, than I had during the storm, when I thought that I was perishing."

"But you believe that you are under the curse of the law?"

"I do; I feel that the law is holy, and the curse awful; but I do not *dread* it and *tremble at it* as I ought."

"Do not be concerned on this account; deep distress arising from the fear of hell is not absolutely necessary to secure peace with God. It is indeed often felt by the awakened sinner; but it is no part of what is *required*, but rather a part of what is *inflicted;* proceeding from the curse of the law rather than from its precept. It is better to say from the heart, 'I have sinned,' than to exclaim, 'my perdition will be greater than I can bear;' better to feel the deadly nature of iniquity than to fear the infliction of punishment. Do not then desire greater

distress of this kind; nor pray for terrifying apprehensions of hell."

At these remarks he was silent and sad; I left him for a few moments to his own reflections, sensible that in his present state of mind, he needed encouragement and comfort. I held up to his mind the invitations of the Gospel in all their glory; the boundless compassion of God, the infinite value of the blood of Christ, the perfect freeness of the salvation offered, the ample provision made for such as have nothing of their own on which to rely, and who utterly despair of doing anything for their own deliverance. I quoted the passage, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found;" he immediately added, "Call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon him." After explaining and applying the passage, I quoted the Saviour's invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—he immediately added, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." He continued: "I believe that I belong to the number of those thus invited; that I am oppressed with the servitude of sin, and bowed down under a load of misery, and that none but Christ can give peace to my guilty conscience, and true satisfaction to my disquieted soul."

I commenced the gracious promise, "The spirit and the bride say come"—the remainder he promptly quoted: "and let him that heareth say come; and let him that

is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Surprised at his knowledge of Scripture, I could not but tell him that since he came on shore he had read the word of God with great diligence.

While I was explaining the nature of faith, and illustrating the different kinds that are spoken of in Scripture, he interrupted me, saying: "I have been taught only one kind, and that may be called religious faith—*faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, wherein we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.*"—Astonished at hearing this, I asked him when and where he had learned it. "In the catechism, when I was a boy."

My curiosity being excited to know his history, he, by repeated questions proposed to him, gave me the following particulars. He was born on one of the islands in the north of Scotland, of pious parents, who gave him a religious education. From his earliest childhood he was accustomed to family worship, morning and evening, and by his parents, pastor, and schoolmaster, carefully instructed in the catechism and the Scriptures.—At an early age, a situation was sought for him on board a ship destined for a long trading voyage to different parts of the world; and he was accordingly bound for a number of years to the captain; and after receiving the advice of his parents and minister, and an exhortation to be a pious boy and a brave sailor, he departed. He was at that time what most boys are at the age of fourteen, thoughtless, light-headed, and reckless of the future. His situation was one of much hardship; his master proved harsh and tyrannical, and the whole crew extreme-

ly wicked. In consequence of his religious education and the checks of conscience, he was at first correct and moral; and by his propriety of conduct reproved the vices of his companions; but after a time, he yielded to temptation, gradually forsook his Bible, and at last indulged in all the profanity and crime which abound among sailors. I need not follow him through all his future course, and tell of the foreign countries which he visited, in how many different ships he sailed, and how he gradually became mate, and afterwards master and part owner of a vessel.—When he was truly awakened by the Spirit, and convinced of sin, (by the means already mentioned,) he seemed at once to transport himself into the time past; his early life recurred to his mind—his father's house, in which he daily heard the voice of prayer and praise, rose to his view; he recalled the religious education which he had received, and had forcibly brought to his remembrance many of those lessons of piety derived from the Scripture and the catechism, in which he had been instructed. That holy book which for more than twenty years he had entirely neglected, now engaged his earnest attention; he reviewed such portions as he had learned in childhood; and as he read from day to day, was more and more convinced of his urgent and immediate need of a Saviour.

After I had received this account of his life, I asked him what effect the recollection of his early religious privileges had upon him?

"It grieves me much to think that I have sinned against such a pious education; such peculiar goodness and mercy; and yet the recollection of these things keeps me from despair; I cannot but think that my

father's desires will be granted, and my mother's prayers heard."

We now returned to the nature of faith in Christ, and while he repeated the definition in the language of the catechism, I asked him if he understood it?

"I am afraid not, though I have some little idea of it; my apprehensions are dull, and my views dim; I would thank you to explain it to me at length, for no subject is of more momentous consequence to me at this time."

I consented, and endeavoured to be as plain and simple as possible.

"Faith, you observe, is a *grace*, because it is the gift of God and freely bestowed; a *saving* grace, because when exercised, salvation is begun, and in due time will be consummated. It consists in *receiving Christ*. You know what it is to receive a gift; the present you may not deserve; he who offers it may perceive that you need it, and will find it useful, and therefore be influenced only by a desire of doing you a kindness. Now Christ, the object of faith, is revealed in Scripture as a gift; presented to such as are absolutely poor, and have nothing of their own; presented to you particularly, who feel your spiritual poverty and utter unworthiness; and you must receive him, lay hold of him, and make him your own.

You must *rest* upon him, just as a house rests upon a solid foundation; just as the ivy, weak in itself, and unable to withstand the slightest wind, rests upon the oak, and entwines around it, and thus stands firmly. You must rest upon him just as a feeble man rests upon his staff as a support. You must rest upon him just as you would, during a shipwreck, rely upon planks to carry

you safely to shore."—Here he interrupted me, saying: "In such a case I would have no *certainty* of being saved from a watery grave; many a poor sailor has thus ventured, and been lost."

"It is true; but let us take the case of Paul, when he was wrecked upon Melita. When the mariners and passengers saw the vessel shattered, the waves prevailing, and no hope of safety remaining in the ship, they heard his declaration—probably received by revelation from his Master—that following his directions, none of them should be lost. They believed him, and cast themselves upon the broken pieces of the vessel without scruple, and clave to them with a cheerful confidence, not doubting that according to the apostle's promise, they should all safely escape. Now 'a greater than' Paul, even his Lord and our Lord, has promised that if we rely, venture, rest upon him, we shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

"But you observe that we must rest upon Christ *alone*. His word is expressive and excludes every thing else but him as the ground of our confidence. There are those who rely upon the general mercy of God, or upon the works of the law; others blend their own works with the righteousness of the Redeemer, and foolishly imagine that they can supply what is wanting in their obedience, by what the Saviour has done and suffered for them. But Christ divided will be of no use; he will never consent to share with the sinner the honour of his salvation.

"We must receive him, *as he is offered to us in the gospel*. He is offered *freely*; 'come ye, buy and eat, without money, and without price.' 'Come and take

freely' is our Master's invitation; come without staying to acquire any good qualities. In the Parable, salvation is offered to the 'poor,' the 'maimed,' the 'halt and the blind'—to those who have no amiable endowment, but every loathsome property; these are not only invited, but entreated, and by every art of persuasion importuned to come. The returning Prodigal came to his Father's house with no recommendation of dress, person, or character; with nothing but his destitution, misery, and acknowledgment of vileness; yet he was received and clothed with the best robe—the righteousness of Christ.

"We must receive Christ *wholly*, for he can give every thing that we want; we must receive him as our 'wisdom,' to enlighten our ignorant minds; our 'righteousness,' to justify our guilty persons; our 'sanctification,' to renew our depraved natures; our 'redemption,' to rescue us from the bondage of sin and Satan.

"We must receive him *particularly*, for so he is offered in the gospel. It is not sufficient that a man believe that the grant of the Saviour is to sinners in general; he must feel that the offer is to him in particular; appropriate Christ to himself, and thus obtain an actual possession of Jesus. Every figurative expression on this subject used in Scripture, implies personal and individual application. Is Christ represented under the similitude of bread? It cannot nourish the body unless it be received and eaten. Is he held forth under the image of waters, ever running, and ever free? But let them run ever so copiously, and ever so freely, they will not quench the thirst, nor refresh the spirits, unless they are drunk. Is he represented as a rock? It will give

no rest to the weary traveller unless he recline upon it. When the Israelites looked unto the brazen serpent, while they all considered it as a cure, each particular person regarded it as a remedy for himself.

"Such is the nature of that grace, a definition of which you have given; and what now hinders you from believing? 'Wilt thou be made whole?' Christ asks."

After this view of faith, thus presented, one might imagine that the inquiring soul to whom the conversation was addressed, would at once have believed in Christ, and have cordially embraced that salvation which is perfect in itself, and free to the sinner. If I had not often seen persons in the same situation, perpetually raising objections, founded on the want of personal merit, I should have wondered that he was so backward to believe; so unwilling to accept the provision which God had made, and enjoy the comfort so freely tendered. Like many, he was reluctant to come divested of every recommendation, and to exercise that genuine self-denial of the gospel which is the hardest sacrifice to human pride.

"I would come to Christ, and receive and rest upon him, if I were prepared."

"Prepared! You say that you feel yourself to be a sinner; that you have deserved Divine wrath; that you feel that Jesus is able and willing to save you; what more is needed? This conviction of sin and sense of want is all that is required; and this is needful, not so much as inclining God to give, as disposing you to receive."

He still objected—"Is there nothing then to be done on my part? No love of God to be exercised—no

heavenly mindedness to be practised—no victory over lusts to be gained—no fruits of holiness to be produced?"

"No! None of these qualities Christ requires—they are the blessings which he freely bestows."

"But must I not have repentance before I come; true, heartfelt repentance?"

"No! For this too the Redeemer confers; 'He is exalted a Prince, and a Saviour to give repentance.' You have given the definition of faith—can you not also give, from the Catechism, the definition of true repentance?" With some assistance, he repeated the answer: '*Repentance unto life is a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.*' "You perceive that the sinner cannot exercise grief and hatred of his sin, and turn from it unto God, until he have '*an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus*'—an expression which denotes saving faith. This is perfectly consistent with the Word of God. Zechariah, referring to the gospel dispensation, intimates that we must first look to the Messiah that was pierced, and then 'mourn as one mourneth for an only son;' so that the tear of penitence may be said to flow from the eye of faith. It is true now, as it was in the days of the apostles, we 'believe and turn unto the Lord.' Talk no more, then, of those qualifications being necessary for you in order to believe in Christ, which he bestows only upon those who have believed in him. You are to come as a beggar; and all who are unwilling to live upon alms, indisposed to stand on a level with publicans and

sinners, derive from him no assistance. By incessantly longing after some merit of your own, though you may not be aware of it, you dishonour the Redeemer, for he wishes you to come with all your sins about you, and all your guilt upon you. Now, your duty, my friend, is plain. I do not exhort you to pray—I know that you do it—nor to read the Scriptures—you are no stranger to that book; but I do exhort you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not only your privilege, but your duty, founded upon an express command: 'This is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ.' It is one of the most important mandates that ever issued from his throne; in neglecting which no other can be kept; in observing which all others will be easy. Now will you not believe in him, and lay hold of his merits as your own? Your warrant to do it is clear and unexceptionable; you are as really authorized to receive Christ with his covenant fulness and rich consolations as you are to eat bread when you hunger, or drink water when you thirst; as you are to breathe the air, or walk by the light of the sun. 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,' is the language of him whose heart and hands are open to you, as widely open as infinite love can set them."

Notwithstanding all that had been said and urged, he earnestly asked, "*When* am I to believe? I feel it to be a duty; but when should it be performed?"

"It is to be done *now*. Christ is able and willing to save you *now*; every invitation, promise, and encouragement relates to the present moment. He says not: 'Come unto me after a while; trust in me at some future time;' but his language is, 'Come, for all things

are *now* ready.' 'To-day, if you will hear his voice'—and that voice says, 'come.'"

At this last remark he was peculiarly thoughtful. I asked him no more questions, and here terminated the conversation. The meeting was dismissed, and he and the others retired.

I have reason to know that the conversation held that evening had a considerable effect upon the mind of Capt. R——. Seeking no acquaintance, and closely occupied with business during the day, he was every evening in his retirement, studying the Word of God, employed in meditation, or engaged in prayer. At the next meeting he was with "the enquirers," as usual. I said to him, "my friend, have you trusted Christ?"

He calmly replied: "How can I mistrust him? so great, so good, so faithful—how can I refuse to confide in him? he suffered for the unjust—he died for sinners—he came to seek and to save that which was lost—to reconcile to God those who are his enemies; I am of that number—how can I disbelieve? and help relying upon him who died for my sins, and arose for my justification? His salvation is every way suited to my condition; perfect in itself, and free to me as a sinner."

"You feel then that it is all free—entirely of grace?"

"I do—God was the first mover in the work—I was found of him whom I neither loved nor sought; and by Divine grace am distinguished from those who were as good as I am, and who were exposed to the same death; but they have lost all their serious impressions, while I am a brand plucked from the burning."

Desiring indirectly to lead him to self-examination, I said: "I know no passage which more beautifully and

concisely describes the character of true Christians than that of the apostle: 'Who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' They 'worship' him from the heart, with gratitude and love; they 'rejoice in Christ Jesus;' to him look for all acceptance; from him derive all their peace, and on him place all their hope; they 'have no confidence in the flesh;' renounce themselves in every view, as unprofitable servants, and disclaim all their works as defective services."

"I have no great joy; but I think that I have no reliance upon any thing of my own for the present or the future; I find a sufficiency in Christ not only to supply my wants, but to make me spiritually rich and eternally happy."

"But though you have no high joy or rapture, have you not something of that rest and calm tranquillity which Jesus promises to the weary and heavy-laden?"

"Yes! he does give rest and comfort; and I love him for every thing that he does and is; his character, as far as I know it, is pleasant to me."

Gratified at such evidence of grace, I concluded the interview with remarking: "Let me now advise you, in the language of Barnabas, 'with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord Jesus;' keep your eye continually fixed upon him; like Paul, 'live a life of faith upon the Son of God.' Cleave to his word; let it 'dwell in you richly in all wisdom'—cleave to his righteousness; daily renounce your own, and rely upon his obedience—cleave to his spirit, pray that you may have it more abundantly, and be filled with his influences—cleave to his example, and look to him as your heavenly

pattern. Thus 'cleave to the Lord' incessantly, closely, inseparably. This will increase your watchfulness, beget true humility of mind, work a greater abhorrence of sin, enkindle ardent love to God, enlarge your heart with benevolence to your fellow men, and exalt your affections far above the world. 'Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.' Faith in him can do more than remove mountains; it can still an unquiet conscience, soften a hard heart, bend a stubborn will, and keep together God and man."

Captain R—— continued several weeks amongst us, attending all our meetings, not forgetting the "meeting of inquiry;" preserving a calm and unruffled mind, growing in knowledge and grace; striving to live, and walk, and pray in the Spirit. The time approaching when he was to leave us, he expressed a desire to make a public profession of religion before his departure. "I feel anxious," said he, "like Timothy, 'to profess a good profession before many witnesses;' to observe God's command, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will be a father unto you;' to have respect to that duty to which the Saviour has annexed so gracious a promise: 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven.'"

"In making this profession of faith what do you suppose you declare?"

"I merely profess publicly what I have done privately; to take Christ as my teacher and instructor; receive him as my priest and sacrifice; submit to him as my king and lawgiver, and adopt him as my pattern and example."

"The command of Christ is a sufficient reason why you should perform the duty; but do you expect to derive from it any benefit?"

"I do; it will release me from the reproach of being Christ's enemy, and confer upon me the honour of being his friend; it will grant me a right and title to all the privileges and comforts of communion with his people; it will give me a decision which I much need, and thus strengthen me to resist temptation; it will enable me, through Divine grace, in consequence of my association with others, to be fortified against the influence of example and reproach; it will increase my usefulness, and, I trust, will make me more zealous in a cause which I publicly profess to espouse."

On the week after this conversation he was admitted into the church, made a public profession of his faith, and entered into covenant with God. It was an interesting occasion—all seemed affected, but none so much as he who on that day first avouched the Lord to be his God. After the service, he said to me with solemnity, "now the world will regard me in a different light from what it has ever done before, and its eyes will be upon me; it knows that I have committed myself, and I must be consistent. I hope that I shall not bring dishonour upon the church, but that I may be a credit and comfort to you all. Pray for me, and let the brethren pray for me when I am far away; for I shall be exposed to many temptations."

"We will not forget you, captain; we will pray for you. Living near to the Redeemer, feeling and expressing your dependence upon him, you will find his 'grace sufficient;' through 'Christ's strengthening,' you can 'do

all things ;' you can be a faithful witness for the Saviour, making him known, and causing him to be loved; an index to the cross—a waymark to heaven; we rejoice that we shall have a member of our church on the ocean; a useful member among those of your profession for whom we ought to be more deeply concerned."

The circumstance of a mariner thus publicly professing Christ increased the interest which was beginning to be felt in behalf of this class of our fellow men. Not long before, a "Seamen's Friend Society" had been formed, a sail-loft procured, the Bethel flag raised, the sailors collected, and the gospel plainly preached to them. When it was known that the master of a ship had joined the church, several began to inquire, whether, as they too were sinners, the gospel was not needed by them; and those who had never before heard the gospel, cheerfully attended the meeting that was instituted for seamen.

Another circumstance occurring about this time had its effect. Captain Q——, who had retired from the active service of the sea, was well known in the community. During the last war with Great Britain, he had commanded a privateer, took many prizes, and on more than one occasion, displayed remarkable heroism. Like most sailors, he was noble and generous in his feelings, but very hostile to religion. Seeing, at one time, a friend who had lately become pious, reading the Bible, he exclaimed, "What! Captain D——, reading again? If you do not take care, that book will yet be the ruin of you."—"No! Captain Q——, it is making me happy; it is taking away from me all fear, and giving me peace of conscience; and it will make me happy in the world

to come."—"Nonsense! taking away fear! I have no fear; I am not afraid of death—I have faced it too often at the cannon's mouth; nor of hell; nor of the Almighty himself."—It is remarkable then, when he came to die, which was not long afterwards, all his boasted courage departed; peculiar fearfulness came on him; the most horrible dread overwhelmed him; God seemed to reveal himself in all his majesty, and the dying man cried out, "Oh! he is too great—he is too great for me!"—"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

Circumstances of this kind so tended to enlist the sympathies of the community in favour of seamen, that the society renewed its exertions with unusual encouragement. Amidst vicissitudes of prosperity and declension, it has at last succeeded in erecting a "Mariner's Church," an ornament to the place in which it is located, and a blessing to many that are ready to perish. Who knows what a connexion there may be between the erection of this church and the prayers of Captain R——.

In preparing for his departure, it was truly gratifying to see the desire which this new convert evinced to be useful; procuring Bibles, tracts, and other good books to carry with him to his destined port, the island of Barbadoes.—"They need," said he, "such books there, for they are very ignorant and irreligious, and I may do some good by distributing them. How they will be surprised to see the change in me; I hope that I shall be faithful, and by my conduct subdue their prejudices against religion, and conciliate their affection to it; that I shall show the light of truth, and the power of love; that I shall be the instrument of drawing some of them to Christ. How much courage and patience do I need!"

I asked him what course he intended to pursue on board the ship? He replied, "I shall have no swearing among the men, check other vice and immorality; daily read the Scriptures, when the weather permits; and oh! that I could pray with them—but *that* I cannot yet do; but I will pray in secret *for* them, and I hope that my prayers may be answered."

We took leave of him as the vessel departed, commending him and the crew to the care of that God, who "holdeth the winds in his hands;" and who "bringeth them that go down to the sea in ships unto their desired haven."

About eighteen months after this, the captain was again with us, having visited several West India islands since his departure. It was pleasant for him to return to the place where he first had a sense of his guilt, and found forgiving mercy; where he first came out from the world into the church, and professed to be a living martyr for Christ; where he had received so much communion with God and his people. It was also truly gratifying to us to see him; to behold him "steadfast and immoveable" in the cause he had professed; to view him a witness of the promise, "I will never leave nor forsake thee;" to have exhibited the living testimony of the truth, that Christ's grace is sufficient for his people. It was pleasant to hear him recount the many scenes through which he had passed since he left us; the dangers to which he had been exposed; the trials which he had endured; the temptations which he had encountered; the seasons of communion which he had enjoyed with the friends of the Redeemer; the instances of conversion of which he hoped that he had been the instrument—all

showing the power of faith, and testifying that he was "following on to know the Lord." He spent only one Sabbath with us, and then departed.

Since that time I have never seen him, nor heard any particular tidings of him. Whether he be tossing on the troubled ocean of life, or have attained the haven of eternal rest, I know not. This I know, that he was a monument to the Lord's praise; that he bore the impress of the Saviour's image on his heart, and exhibited the marks of Divine grace in his life, with peculiar simplicity and unfeigned sincerity.

Some useful reflections are suggested by this brief history.

1. We are taught by narratives of this kind the *different ways in which persons are brought to a knowledge of the truth.*

Who would not suppose that the seaman whose conversion we have considered, the man profane and wicked, who had sinned against so much religious instruction, would have been overwhelmed with an awful dread of future punishment; would have exclaimed in agony, "Who can dwell with the devouring fire? who can endure everlasting burnings?" But he seems not to have had any such fears; at one time he lamented that he felt not this dread, erroneously thinking that it was necessary to salvation. There was little of the terrors of Sinai attending his change—no thunders of the law—no violent alarms of conscience; on the contrary, from the very commencement, he was encouraged; from the earliest dawn of conviction he hoped that "the good work which was begun in him would be carried on unto the day of Jesus Christ."

In every age, God has various ways to "make his people willing in the day of his power." Some he enlightens in a gradual way, and draws with the cords of love; they calmly hear the "still small voice" of the Spirit, and meekly submit to the authority of Jesus; while he strikes conviction into the minds of others as with a voice of thunder; gives them an awful view of the bottomless pit, and brings them to the very verge of despair. Many of the reasons of this difference in the Divine conduct we cannot explain. As God effectually calls whom he will, so he brings them to a knowledge of his salvation in what way, and by what means, he pleases. It is not necessary for one's satisfaction to inquire, "Have I had great fears of hell? by what means were they wrought? how long did they continue?" but "Do I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? have I now the fruits of the Spirit?"—"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

2. Another truth is taught—the *necessity of encouragement to the sinner, however vicious he may be; however far he may have departed from Christ.*

Such a course was pursued towards the subject of this narrative, when under conviction of sin; he was told that he should take encouragement from the abundant promises and invitations of the gospel; that there was no reason why he should stand trembling at a distance, as if there were no favour for him, but that in the way of grace he should confidently look for it in the name of Christ.

Every thing in the word of God and in the nature of man teaches us the necessity of encouraging *all* sinners, whatever may be their character, to hope in God's mercy;

to believe that if they trust in Christ, and repent of their sins, they will be saved. There are not a few, I think, who, if they were *absolutely sure* that God is willing to pardon them, would be induced to turn and seek his mercy; a deep, heartfelt sense of this truth would sustain them in their calamities, and keep them from despair. Many there are, I have reason to believe, who, having long indulged their wicked propensities, and having been the occasion of ruin to others, say with those mentioned by the prophet, "there is no hope! no; for we have loved strangers, and after them will we go!" Thus, in a kind of sullen despair, they harden their consciences, to enjoy for a while the pleasures of sin without control or remorse; perceiving no reason for hope, they endeavour to discard fear; having no conception that "there is forgiveness with God" for such enormous offenders, they rush on to ruin. What can tend so effectually to break this destructive snare as the proclamation that the most profligate and vicious have a complete warrant to believe in Christ? What affords so firm a foundation for hope under bloody and "crimson" sins, as the fact that the grace of Christ is absolutely free, confined to no rules, and acting as it pleases? The affectionate preaching of such doctrine by Whitefield was the means of touching the hearts of the poor colliers at Kingswood—the repeated annunciation of the same truths by Rowland Hill found its way to the affections of the sailors at Portsmouth; in both instances they were encouraged, under the character of vile and perishing sinners, at once to rely upon Christ, assured that in so doing, they would not be disappointed. Let sinners of every class and description be made to know that there is pardon for them, full and

free pardon, if they believe and repent; that if disposed to turn unto God, the gracious invitations of Scripture; the assurances of Christ's power and willingness; the declarations of the infinite fulness of his atonement, interpose between them and despair; between them and perdition.—"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that *hope in his mercy.*"

3. *What encouragement is given to pious parents* who faithfully perform their duties to their children.

The parents of the subject of this narrative had carefully attended to his religious education from his earliest childhood to his departure from their house. But they lived not to see their labours blessed, and the image of God impressed upon the heart of their child; they were taken from the world, and he was left, a stranger to Divine grace, profaning the name of his Maker, scoffing at the religion of his fathers, and encouraging others in guilt. But after he had for years rushed heedlessly forward in the path of folly and vice, he was arrested by Divine mercy, and made a trophy of sovereign love. Who will not suppose that the many prayers which his father and mother had offered were then heard; and that by turning unto the Lord, he bestowed on them sensations of joy, greater even than they would have felt had they in life seen him walking in the paths of holiness? Such joy the good Hezekiah must have had in the realms of bliss, when his son Manasseh repented of his sins, and gave to the pious father the assurance that he would meet him before the throne of glory. Let considerations like these encourage pious parents to be faithful to their children; to exercise over them a wise discipline, give them religious instruction, illustrating their precepts by

personal example, and often pray to God for a blessing. Their efforts for a time may appear to fail of success; they may be tried to the very utmost by the evil dispositions and conduct of their offspring; but they have no reason to despond. This is not the only instance that teaches us that early impressions and convictions of conscience have lain dormant for years, and at last have revived into gracious maturity; that pious instructions, given in youth, neglected and forgotten, have, in some hour of calamity, been forcibly brought to remembrance by the Holy Spirit, and produced a true and saving conversion.—"I will be your God, and the God of your seed after you," is the gracious assurance given to those parents who trust him in faith and patience. Hear it, ye praying fathers and mothers, for "the promise is unto you and your *children*."

3. Let this narrative *lead to greater efforts for the salvation of seamen.*

Here is presented an interesting instance of conversion among a portion of our fellow men, considered until lately the most unpromising subjects of Divine grace. It is a matter of astonishment and delight to contemplate such an example of devoted piety; and yet it is only one of many instances that have recently occurred among this class of the community. The efforts made for their moral improvement have been particularly honoured, and have resulted in the salvation of hundreds and thousands. Let this good cause have a larger share of the sympathies of Christians in every part of the world; let it call into requisition every energy of their souls; impel to severer duties, incite to greater sacrifices, and lead to more humble, ardent, persevering prayer. Then the

traveller, as he crosses seas and oceans, will find in every vessel an altar erected to the blessed Redeemer; on every coast, sanctuaries consecrated to the living God; in every port, hymns of gratitude and praise vibrating upon his ear.

CHAPTER III.

THE DAUGHTER OF DEJECTION COMFORTED.

—"He came to cheer
The broken-hearted; to raise up the sick;
And on the wandering and benighted mind
To pour the light of truth."

While subject to all the ordinary afflictions of life, the Christian has other sources of sorrow unknown to the world. Among these is the apprehension of his safety before God; the most perplexing doubts respecting his religious character, and distressing fears concerning the foundation of his hopes. Some of the best people of God have here been peculiarly tried, and have found from experience that it is the severest affliction that could befal them. To "walk in darkness and see no light," is indeed distressing to those who sensibly feel their depravity, perceive the extent of the Divine law, appreciate the value of the human soul, and know the danger of coming short of salvation. In comparison with this, all other trials seem light. They could support with firmness every trouble of life, were they but certain of their eternal safety; endure the frowns of men with composure, were they conscious of the favour of God; support willingly "these light afflictions which are but for a moment," were they confident that they would "work out for them an exceeding and eternal weight of glory;"

suffer death with tranquillity and triumph, were they assured that they "would be for ever with the Lord."

Various are the causes of this spiritual darkness. In the instance which I am about to mention, its continuance for a considerable time, was owing to the want of proper means to dispel the darkness and receive light and comfort.

The person thus afflicted, was a female member of the church of which I was pastor, well educated and intelligent, consistent in her conduct, exemplary in all the relations of life, even eminent for her humility, penitence, watchfulness, tenderness of conscience, and zeal for the salvation of others. But her cheerfulness was not in proportion to her other attainments, nor her joy commensurate with her spiritual progress. On the contrary, she was afflicted by a religious depression that was truly lamentable; and while all her friends had the firmest confidence in her piety, she was "writing bitter things against" herself; while they were presenting her as a model of what was "pure, lovely, and of good report," she was doubting whether she had ever been "renewed in the spirit of her mind;" whether her penitence and faith were genuine; whether her hopes for eternity were any thing more than a splendid delusion.

In my first visits to her, I said but little respecting the state of her mind and the cause of her feelings; anxious, if possible, to ascertain, without any direct enquiry, the origin of her darkness and doubts. I in time learned that in her excessive dread lest she should come short of heaven, and her anxious solicitude to ascertain whether she was in a state of acceptance with God, or under the condemnation of the law, she was constantly searching

into the evidences of a state of conversion; that in her religious reading, next to the Bible, the books which fully treated on such subjects, she most frequently read; that one book, excellent in itself, and containing much valuable religious casuistry, she assiduously studied; and that day and night she intensely examined those parts that relate to the work of grace in the heart. But all this reading and scrutiny had no effect in removing her darkness or taking away her doubts.

After much reflection, I determined to have an unreserved conversation with her on the subject. I observed that it was evidently the privilege of all Christians to enjoy Divine consolation; that religion was not a vexatious burden, or an irksome task, but intended to be the comfort of our lives and the joy of our hearts; that God is "the God of all comfort;" that Christ is styled "the consolation of Israel," and the Holy Ghost "the Comforter;" that the gospel is "the joyful sound;" that "the fruits of the Spirit are joy and peace."

"I am sure of it," she replied, "and it is the reason why I am anxious to know with certainty whether I am a child of God, and entitled to the promises; with such knowledge I shall be happy."

"It is most desirable knowledge. I cannot conceive of any thing more afflictive than suspense on this subject; a continued doubt whether our final portion be in the regions of misery, or the mansions of glory."

"You think, then, that assurance can be attained?"

"Certainly—it can, and has been attained by saints in all ages. David could say without any doubt, 'the Lord is all my salvation, and all my desire—the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want—bless the Lord, O! my

soul who forgiveth all thine iniquities.' Habakkuk could say, 'the Lord God is my strength.'—Can you imagine that now, in the days of the gospel, when our advantages are greater, and our light clearer, our comforts should be fewer? Christians in the apostolic age could say, 'we *know* that we have passed from death unto life;' they were free from that uneasiness and doubt which too much characterize believers of our day. It is true, there were then, as now, hypocrites and self-deceivers; but *real* Christians seemed to enjoy uniform assurance of faith and hope; this firm persuasion of their acceptance they possessed, not because they were exposed to persecution, and needed peculiar supports; not because they lived nearer the time of the Redeemer's death, but because they had stronger faith, and relied more simply upon Christ's righteousness; and just in proportion as we imitate them in this respect, will practical religion advance in our hearts."

"You do not mean to say that freedom from doubts is essential to salvation, and necessary for the existence of true faith?"

"By no means—I have known several of God's children who are in a much better condition with regard to his favour than they themselves believe; several who are, in my estimation, sincerely 'righteous,' for whom 'light is sown,' truly 'mourning' over sin, for whom 'joyful gladness is prepared,' suffering 'the spirit of heaviness,' who through eternity will be clothed with 'the garments of praise.' I believe that God loves them, and Christ intercedes for them, though they are under the constant influence of misgiving fears; else whence this searching of heart, this acknowledgment

of guilt, this self-condemnation, this thirst after pardoning and sanctifying grace?—But do not these persons deprive themselves of the richest source of comfort, as long as they suffer these doubts to remain? Are there not several duties which they can scarcely perform; several graces which they can hardly exercise, in an habitual state of suspense and uncertainty? How is it possible to praise God for a favour which we are not certain that we have received? Or if a feeble hope mixed with many fears be entitled to devout acknowledgment, our praises must be faint and languid, in proportion to the mixture of darkness and uncertainty that attends it. Such doubts are not to be ascribed to any deficiency of Scripture, or any want of fulness in Christ, but entirely to ourselves. If this be the case, those apprehensions that have given you so much perplexity, and that darkness which has cost you so much anguish, should be regarded as your enemies; you should pray against them with ardour, and oppose them with resolution."

"This is what I am endeavouring to do; but the more I strive, the more I experience every thing of a distressing nature. I seek God by prayer day and night, but he still hides his face from me; I read his word, and find there much to aggravate my distress, but little to give me comfort; I examine myself by marks of a converted state, laid down by pious writers, and search for the evidences of renewing grace in my heart, but all in vain; if a glimpse of hope break in upon me, it is only of short duration; the more I search, the more dark, confounded, and distressed I become. I omit not the means of grace; but in the house of God, and at the Lord's Supper, the most melancholy darkness rushes

into my soul, making me feel that all my worship is only a solemn mockery."

I deeply felt for her, and expressing my tender sympathy, said, "Are you sure that the means which you have used to know your state, and to remove your darkness, has been the wisest and the best? You look for evidences of grace; and, from what you say, are doing it in the season of darkness. Is that the season for such search? Would you not be naturally led at such a time to have low and imperfect ideas of the character of God; to consider him rather as breaking than supporting the bruised reed, as quenching, rather than reviving, the smoking flax? Would there not be such a distrust, misapprehension, and hesitancy as would dispose you to look on the dark side; to regard as counterfeits what might be truly Christian virtues, and to consider as restraining, what might be in reality saving grace? The means which you have taken has perplexed, rather than calmed your mind; cherished, rather than removed, your doubts and fears. Let the marks of conversion be what they please; they cannot be clearly discerned by you, and therefore must yield but a feeble evidence; as you have said, they may give a glimpse of hope which will soon be gone, and succeeded by darkness. Such glimmering and precarious evidence will never afford stable hope—much less, permanent and uniform assurance. For years you have tried this method of obtaining comfort; and instead of finding it a relief, you have found that it has increased your depression, and almost driven you to despair. You are desiring, (and the desire in many respects is right and good,) to view the image of God clearly impressed upon

your heart; to see more of the saint, and less of the sinner. But you must be aware that if you were the holiest saint on earth, your personal purity would not, could not, be the ground of your comfort; the only true foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ; upon him and his righteousness the purest saint must depend as much as the vilest sinner; and to him the latter is as welcome as the former. In your religious exercises, may you not, without being conscious of it, be relying in some degree upon your own righteousness; building your comforts and hopes so much upon the evidences of grace as to overlook the great Redeemer? May you not be mingling with this 'sure foundation,' as the apostle expresses it, some 'wood, hay, and stubble,' some duties and obedience of your own, forgetting that Christ gives what we ask, only 'through the riches of his grace.' Christians, as well as awakened sinners, are liable to self-righteousness; there are few in whom the legal principle does not, at times, more or less operate; and I can conceive of a person in your situation so anxious to determine his state in the sight of God, as to employ means not perfectly agreeable with the free graces of the Redeemer; so wholly engaged in proving his character consistent with a state of grace, as to be diverted from that *grand object* to which he should first and principally look—the atonement and everlasting righteousness of Jesus. Now let me recommend you to cease looking at yourself, and to turn your eyes entirely from your past experience; it will be of little value to you to reflect that there was a time when your frame of mind was more tranquil than it now is, when the candle of the Lord seemed to shine brightly upon your head, and when you

were supported by the unclouded anticipations of eternal glory; you want a surer ground of dependence than your own variable feelings; than any thing which you possess. Take another method, which is agreeable to the advice of Scripture; 'who is among you that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.'"

"Do you mean," said she eagerly, "that in order to ascertain my condition, I should cease to examine myself, and compare my character and conduct with the evidences of grace?"

"You have already done that; and you have not advanced a single step towards your desired object; you have sought comfort in *sanctification* and have failed; let me now advise you to seek it in *justification*."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you should cease entirely to search through your past life for evidence of piety; in your present situation, whatever others may see, you cannot find it. You have been reading, thinking, hearing, praying, and examining yourself, and yet you are no nearer to happiness than when you commenced; there is no peace nor rest to your soul. Now give up entirely the point of proving yourself a child of God as a medium of comfort."

"Give up!" she feelingly exclaimed, "give up seeking, examining myself, the use of such means of grace—it will be giving up my salvation!"

"No! it may be the means of giving you a bright hope, and even an assurance of your salvation. If you cannot come to Christ as a *saint* and receive comfort, come to him as a *sinner*, and accept pardon; if you can-

not, after the most diligent enquiries into the evidences of grace, approach God as one of his renewed people, then draw near, as to one from whom all renewing grace and its evidences flow. You are a sinner!"

"I am—I feel it; a guilty, polluted, perishing sinner, without help in myself; and among other sins, what criminal unbelief and self-righteousness have I been guilty of, so dishonourable to God, displeasing to Christ, and injurious to myself; by such iniquity I have made myself of all creatures the most miserable."

"I need not tell *you* of the facts and doctrines, declarations and promises of the Gospel; not declare that they are free and open to all without exception who desire salvation; nor say that faith is neither more nor less than a sincere crediting of the truth of the declaration, and a firm reliance upon the promise connected with it—you know all these things. Go then to Christ, and make a renewed, or if you choose so to call it, an *entirely new* surrender of yourself to him; exercise strong faith; say not, it may be that the Lord will receive and welcome me, and therefore I will try, but go, as you are recommended by the apostle, 'boldly;' go to him poor and needy, destitute and wretched—his heart is free, his arms are open—he will not reject you because of your past provocation and present corruption—he will rejoice to receive you. When you have obtained from him pardon and hope, banish for ever all doubts and fears; continue to exercise a firm and unshaken persuasion of your reconciliation with God through Christ Jesus. I do not think that assurance is essential to faith, but I do think that if one has the latter, he will desire and aspire after the former; that if he use the right method, he will at-

tain it, and that the best means, in most cases, and certainly in yours, is 'looking unto Jesus,' rather than searching for renewed qualities in the soul."

After a pause of a few minutes, she exclaimed: "Assurance is a great blessing; to say without doubt 'Christ and the benefits of his purchase are mine; the Holy Spirit, with his influences, is mine; heaven, with all its glories, is mine'—what a privilege!"

"And what hinders you and me from possessing it, if it be the result of strong and unwavering faith in Christ? We have a warrant for it, the best of warrants—the gift of God. It does seem to me to be intimately connected with the faithful performance of every Christian duty. How can we 'rejoice in the Lord,' if unbelieving doubts predominate—how 'walk worthy of God who hath called us to his kingdom and glory,' unless assured that he has effectually called us—how 'abound in the works of the Lord,' unless we have an animating prospect of a glorious resurrection—how 'be followers of God, as dear children,' unless we can say with filial confidence 'Abba Father'—how 'cleanse ourselves from all pollution of the flesh and spirit,' unless we have an assured reliance upon those 'precious promises which are given us in Christ Jesus'—how pray 'with boldness, and have access with confidence,' 'nothing doubting,' unless we have this inestimable blessing—how 'have communion and fellowship with God,' if there be even a suspicion of his alienation from us; if there be not a confident assurance of his reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to him? Such confident persuasion is honourable to God, and gives to him the highest glory; it is also pleasing to Christ, for nothing delights him so much as confident

trust in him; so grieves him as to be compelled to say to his children, 'O! fools, slow of heart to believe—why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?'"

"But is this blessing as much prized, and as earnestly sought as its importance requires?"

"It is not—it is to be grievously lamented that such numbers have lived so many years since Christ called them by his grace, and have spent their lives doubting; they thus began their Christian course—they thus prosecute it—and they, at last, thus die. We have an express command, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election *sure;*' it is a duty, therefore, as well as a blessing; and if it were more regarded as an obligation, it would oftener be attained as a privilege. The expression '*give all diligence*' implies that it is a difficult duty. To trust in an unseen God, to believe in his unchangeable love, when we see only frowns; to confide in his bare word, when we perceive no prospect of immediate performance, is no easy thing. Too many Christians, from the neglect of this duty, have their love cooled and their comfort diminished; their doubts subject them to that 'fear which hath torment,' produce unfruitfulness, and impoverish the whole soul. Exercise then a strong, immovable, and triumphant faith; with a firm hand lay hold of the promises which are sealed by the oath of the Father, the blood of the Son, and the witness of the Spirit. Thus believing, you 'will not be confounded;' you will 'have the witness in yourself;' you will be 'sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise;' you will perceive all your doubts gone. You may afterwards find, as all believers do, your best hours defiled by sinful infirmities, and your best duties stained with evil imperfec-

tions; but you can look to Christ, and be forgiven and sustained. You may have seasons of desertion, but looking to Christ will make them transient. You will have many duties to perform, many temptations to resist, many corruptions to mortify, and many graces to cultivate; but look to Christ, and you can obtain all needful succour."

I ceased speaking. After a pause of some minutes, she said: "Is this all the advice which you give? How different from what I have been accustomed to. I have been instructed by others, and by the books which I have read, to look at my feelings and conduct; to enquire in what manner I performed this duty, and in what way I resisted that temptation; whether this evidence of conversion be seen in my life, and that proof of repentance be apparent in my heart. Your counsel is different."

"It is the only advice which I can give. I repeat it; go to Christ, compare your sins with his blood, your wants with his fulness, your unbelief with his faithfulness, your weakness with his strength, your inconstancy with his everlasting love. One glimpse of him by faith, one kind word from his lips, one smile of his countenance, one token of his love, in this your day of darkness and doubt, will cheer and refresh your soul more than all the services in which you have been engaged. He is the crown of crowns, the glory of glories, the heaven of heavens, 'all and in all;' and if you seek for light and satisfaction in any thing but in him, you will be like the men of Shechem, who forsook the sweetness of the fig-tree and vine for the bramble which consumed them. I leave you, saying, that though your comfort is gone, the author of your comfort lives—appeal from a God angry to a God appeased—appeased

in Christ Jesus; and though your candle is put out, God, I trust, will light it again, and make it burn more brightly than ever."

I left her, commending her to Him who "is anointed to give the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Visiting her some days afterwards, I was gratified in finding her calm and quiet—her simple, child-like trust in that Saviour who had "borne her griefs, and carried her sorrows," did for her soul what all her efforts, sincere and long continued, could not accomplish.

"I have learned," said she, "a lesson which I hope I shall never forget, that a spirit of *dejection* is not a spirit of *humility*, for true humiliation urges to Christ, and throws the soul at his feet; I find that a great part of my trouble has arisen from a mistaken apprehension of the Saviour, that I have judged of him by my sense, not by his promise; by my own frame, and not by his unchanging character; I am now fully convinced that I can obtain peace and joy, not by looking inward and examining my heart, nor by inspecting my duties, in the best of which I discover many flaws; but only by repeatedly and incessantly looking to Christ, in whom I see my sins forgiven, and my person accepted—he is the sun of right eousness that must daily enlighten and enliven me, or I shall again be in darkness; my food on which I must continually live, as the Israelites subsisted on the manna from heaven, and the water from the rock. God helping me, I will never hereafter rely on any thing of my own, either for present joy, or future glory; I know from experience, that to rest upon the elevation of my spirits, or the enlargement of my devotion, is to build upon a

foundation which cannot abide; but Christ is a 'rock' that 'standeth fast for ever;' amidst all changes, he is invariably the same; his promises are yea and amen—he ever lives, ever loves, ever pities, ever pleads. If I cannot shine as a *saint*, I will beg as a *sinner;* I want nothing and ask nothing but what he who 'cannot lie' has promised, and what is confirmed in Jesus Christ, the true and faithful witness."

"You speak of changes—you will have them; the Christian's sky is never long clear and without clouds; changes of way and weather must be expected of 'strangers and pilgrims' who are journeying to heaven. But the promise never changes, and if you ever think that it fails, be assured that it is only because your faith is feeble; like a giddy man who, standing upon an elevated rock, thinks that it shakes and totters, when the tremour is only in his own limbs. In your access to Christ, ask frequently, and for the greatest blessings. This access is different from the intercourse which you have with earthly friends. You are welcome to them, when you visit them occasionally, and ask small favours; but if you go daily, solicit great things, and increase your requests, they will quickly grow weary of you. But what said Christ to his disciples? 'Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.' Had they not already asked great things—that he would expound his word to them; teach them to pray; increase their faith; but all this was as nothing to the Saviour, compared with the great things which they needed, and which he was ready to bestow—'ask still more, and ye shall receive more, even till your wants be full.' Observe what he requires; he

would have you ask and expect great things. Faith and prayer, and praise, will widen your heart to receive more and more of Christ's fulness. 'Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;' if you would be 'joyful in hope,' then, as the means of attaining it, be steadfast in faith."

I frequently saw her after this conversation, and although, for a time, there were appearances of her former depression, as the water of the sea is not immediately stilled, but moves and trembles after the storm is over; yet at last she became habitually calm and peaceful; and whenever she felt her heart hard, and dead, and sad, she at once looked to Christ, and found it to be softened, quickened, and comforted. She always acknowledged that the method employed to remove her darkness was the only one that with her could be effectual; and that when she became wholly discontented with herself and her duties, she was led renewedly to believe in Christ, and was sustained. Such a course she often recommended to her pious friends, urged its importance, and said, "We cannot lay too much stress upon faith, provided its nature be well understood; it is a vital, operative, victorious principle—all things are possible to him that believeth."

We may derive from this little incident some profitable instruction.

1. It should lead us to *sympathize with such of God's children as walk in darkness and see no light;* who are "cast down and disquieted within them;" in whose heart God is, though they see him, and feel him, and hear him not. There are such, like the person whom we have been contemplating, who "go mourning," not

only "all the day," but all the year "long;" who have a wounded spirit torn with apprehensions of the malignity of sin, the dread of the displeasure of the Almighty, and the awful fear that they may be given up by him to the tyranny of their corruptions. When the sun is eclipsed, all nature appears to mourn; so when the beams of God's countenance no longer shine upon his saints, all is gloomy; every thing without has a melancholy aspect, indicative of the dismal darkness within. For them, the ordinances of religion have no sweetness—prayer no delight—the word of God no satisfaction—mercies no impress of a Father's love. They seem almost to sip of that cup which the Son of God drank to its very dregs. Surely such persons should be the objects of our tenderest sympathy, and the subjects of our affectionate prayers. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord."

2. *The means by which the subject of this narrative obtained light and joy, comfort and assurance, is worthy of notice.* She relinquished entirely the point of proving herself a child of God as a medium of comfort; and when she discovered nothing in her heart and life which deserved the name of *holiness*, she cast herself as a helpless sinner upon Christ, and believed that his blood could cleanse her from her sins. Now is not this usually the best means of dispelling the spiritual darkness of the Christian, removing his painful doubts, and relieving his burdened conscience? I mean not to discourage self-examination, a most useful and essential duty; nor to reject all evidences of grace; marks and signs of piety derived from the work of sanctification in the soul. But may not the continued reference to these evidences, and the use of no other means, tend, as in the case before us,

to perplex the trembling soul, and actually to increase doubts and fears? Why should Christians lose their time, and embarrass their minds in such methods, when there is such a direct, certain, and compendious way of obtaining peace by at once receiving Christ and his merits? Whether their doubts be well or ill founded, they see the door of mercy opened, and all the blessings of the gospel presented to them as sinners; they have a warrant to receive them—it is their duty and their privilege. Let them trust in the all-sufficient Saviour who is free for the acceptance of all; and learn that the foundation of their comfort lies, not in any good works to be performed by them, nor any consciousness of their sincerity, nor any experience of a work of grace upon their heart, but entirely in the promise of Christ, and the testimony of God in the gospel. If they can find no evidences, let them *make* them; let them at once act faith in Jesus Christ, and they will have the best evidence in the Scripture, for "*whosoever believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life.*"

CHAPTER IV.

THE INJURED MAN SUBDUED.

—"How beautifully falls
From human lips that blessed word, FORGIVE."

No duty is more frequently enjoined in Scripture, than love to man; it is made the identifying mark of the discipleship of Jesus, the evidence of regeneration, and the test of character at the judgment-day. For the credit of religion, the honour of the Redeemer, and the good of the world, Christians should cultivate to a high degree this heavenly grace; exhibit the spirit which shone so brightly in the author of Christianity, and put forth the excellencies of love in all their vigour, fulness, and harmony. Every faithful pastor will delight to promote this pure and godlike temper; as a man and a preacher of love, he will exemplify it both by his discourses and his example; sensible how much it is connected with his usefulness, he will labour to bring his flock into the closest union; and if he see a pure, refined, pervading sympathy among them, he will rejoice, "thank God, and take courage." But on the contrary, how much is his heart grieved, if he see them in any degree alienated from each other, estranged by cold and distant formalities, divided and contentious, evincing a spirit of rancour and malice! No duty is more painful and difficult to him, than to reconcile such differences; often does he

fail, and exclaim with the Psalmist, "I labour for peace, but when I speak unto them thereof, they make them ready to battle." But if he persevere in the spirit of wisdom and forbearance, he may attain the fulfilment of the promise; "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Happy will he be, if he can persuade any to love their enemies, and to bury in forgetfulness all their hostilities.

An instance, not to be forgotten, of an injury received by one of the members of the church of which I was pastor, led to the following interview and conversation.

He had been falsely reproached, and greatly calumniated—accused of things which he had never done, injured in his property and prospects, and made to feel that his character was in danger of being seriously affected. He was a man of warm temperament, and perhaps at this time kept not as strict a guard over his feelings as he should have done. He sent for me a few days before the Communion. I found him so much under the influence of strong excitement in remembrance of his injury, that for a minute or two he could utter nothing; at length, becoming calm, he said, "You have heard all that has occurred; I have been injuriously used, and cruelly treated, without provocation or cause; I have sent for you to enquire whether in these circumstances, I should on the next Sabbath partake of the Lord's Supper."

"If you are sure that you have no hatred or ill-will towards those who have offended you, I should advise you to come; it is an ordinance well calculated to calm the mind, and, exhibiting Christ as dying for his enemies, to inspire us with something of his spirit. But I

am free to say, that the hands which are to be lifted up, and the hearts that are to be brought to the Lord's table must be 'without wrath;' those who are living in anger, who are implacable and unmerciful, proud and resentful, unwilling to ask, and reluctant to grant forgiveness, have 'no part in this matter;' they have a temper which utterly excludes them—if they be deficient in a spirit of charity, and suffer the venom of malice to rankle in their hearts, they cannot spiritually eat of the Lord's body, nor have communion with him at his feast, nor partake of his benefits."

"I hope that I do not belong to the number of the malicious, though I confess that I am very much hurt—it is a severe trial to be so treated, and by some who professed to be my friends."

"It is indeed a trial; but we should recollect that the servants of God, in all ages, have been reproached and slandered. How falsely Joseph was accused by the wife of Potiphar, David by Doeg, and Job by his pretended friends! Naboth was accused of blasphemy, Elijah of being 'the troubler of Israel,' Jeremiah of being the instigator of sedition, and Paul and his fellow apostles of being the deceivers and deluders of the people. You know how greatly reproached, falsely accused, and cruelly persecuted, was our blessed Redeemer. Indeed, I suppose that there is no Christian who will not have cause, sooner or later, to say, 'false witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.' The religion of Jesus could not exist in the world, unless his disciples were patient in bearing reproaches. With respect to those who have injured us, we have, from our Saviour, express direction of the manner in which we

should treat them.—'I say unto you, love your enemies.'"

"Love them! how can I do it?"

"You can, my friend, the grace of God assisting you; it has been done by others; it is now done by thousands of Christians who have made this high attainment, and are enjoying the fruit of it, a calm peace of mind. But do not misunderstand the duty; it is not, of course, a love of complacency, like that which you have for your relatives and friends; not a love of esteem, which arises from a perception of the excellencies of character—this would be a contradiction to nature and reason—but a love of benevolence, which inclines us to seek the happiness of our enemies, and to promote their welfare; to do them such beneficent offices as are within our power; to return good for evil, kindness for injuries, favours for provocations. Nothing is intimated which requires approbation, good opinion, esteem, or complacency. Many from wrong conception of the duty, and the misrepresentation of it to themselves and others, have supposed that it was beyond our reach in the present state of human nature, and have exclaimed in despair, 'it is impossible to perform it.' But as I have defined it, there is nothing but what is purely magnanimous; nothing that is inconsistent with the prevention or reparation of injuries; nothing which forbids us to provide for our safety, or preserve our rights; nothing which prevents us from thinking of men as they appear in their character and actions, and commending or condemning them, according to the judgment of truth, equity, and candour. Whatever their character or actions may be; whether they be worthy of esteem or disesteem; whether they be

righteous or unrighteous, peaceable or turbulent, kind or cruel, we are bound to exercise towards them the sincerest benevolence."

"But how is this benevolence evinced? what is implied in it?"

"It implies the banishment from the heart of all ill-will and rancour; of that 'leaven of malice' of which the apostle speaks; and which is so termed, because it ferments and spreads, sours the temper, and affects the whole soul. There are those who show no enmity by words or actions, who secretly indulge a malicious spirit, brood over their injuries in wrathful silence, and inwardly desire the destruction of those who have inflicted them. What mortal enemies to themselves are such men! we might as well expect quietude and comfort in a haunt of banditti, or in a den of wild beasts, as in such hearts. To love our enemy is, as far as possible, to be kind to him. If we meet him, and pass him by with manifest scorn, delight in talking of his failings, and lowering him in the estimation of others, show ill-will to his relatives on his account, watch for an opportunity to perform some little act of annoyance towards him, and feel gratified at the thought that we have given him pain or trouble, we show no benevolence; we indulge a spirit of revenge. If we take delight in his misconduct; in viewing him blasting his reputation, and ruining his interest; in seeing himself injured in the way in which he injured us; we do not exercise benevolence, but unkindness and revenge. If you would obey the precept of the Saviour, you must act in a manner just the reverse. Is your enemy sick and languishing, and is it in your power to cure him? you are bound to be concerned for his ill-

ness, to provide a remedy, to rescue him from the grave, and to save his life.—Is he defrauded, and in danger of losing his estate? you are not to sit still, and see him ruined, though he is your enemy; discover the fraud and repel the force; keep him from poverty; be as forward in the pursuit of the thief who stole his goods as if the injury had been done to your friend or yourself.—Can you raise him to honour and preferment? Do it; and if it can be done secretly, and without his knowledge, the more noble and disinterested will be the act."

"No enemy of mine," said the injured man, "I am sure, would thus act towards me."

"Grant it—but is your disposition to be influenced and regulated by his temper? If he has acted wrongfully, can this be a reason for your acting sinfully? If he has been unreasonable and perverse, must you follow his example? His conduct, be it what it may, cannot in any degree cancel your obligations to obey the Saviour's command, 'Do good to them that hate you.'"

"But no opportunity is offered to me to do good to my enemies; they are not in poverty and need not my relief, nor in danger and need not my protection, nor in habits of intercourse with me to make known their wants."

"There is one thing of theirs, my friend, which you have in your possession, which is dearer to them than gold or silver—perhaps than life itself; in their estimation, the brightest jewel in their crown."

"What is that? I know not that I possess any thing of theirs."

"It is their character and reputation. Whenever, then, you enquire how you can do good to your enemies, separated, and enjoying no intercourse with them, learn

that you can do it by refraining, as far as is consistent with justice, from speaking ill of them; by keeping silence on the subject of their injuries, if you can say nothing of their virtues. David seemed to act thus; 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth'—to complain of God or of his own foes, 'because thou didst it.' It is said of our Saviour; 'he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth to complain of his enemies.'—How very valuable is such conduct under provocations and persecutions! Speak well of your friends—say nothing of your enemies. Who ever injured himself by refraining to speak ill of others? Be silent, then, upon principle, with regard to your enemies, and often pray with David: 'Keep Thou the door of my lips.'"

"It will be very difficult, habitually, to say nothing on this subject; it will need great self-denial and watchfulness, and require much of the spirit of Him who 'answered not a word' to the taunting questions of Pilate and the Jews; who, 'as a sheep before her shearers was dumb, and opened not His mouth.' I know how useful silence is in repressing anger, and quenching the flames of wrath; how often it disarms opposition, smoothes irritation, and allays resentment. O! that I may from the heart make the resolution of David: 'I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue!'—But is this all that is comprehended in the command of the Saviour, 'love your enemies,'"

"No! it also includes prayer for them; 'pray for those who despitefully use and persecute you.' By prayer we bring God into the scene, acknowledge that we ourselves cannot do enough for our enemies, and call in his assistance to complete the kindness; sensible that

our own means are inefficient, we repair to Infinity, and invoke the Omnipotent, out of his abundant fulness, to shed down upon them all temporal and spiritual blessings. When we pray for ourselves, we are influenced by a regard to our own happiness, and may be only under the influence of self-love; but when we supplicate as earnestly for an enemy as we do for our own souls, and strive with 'strong cryings and tears,' to make God his friend who will not himself be our friend, then we have such a love as reaches to the very heavens.—Besides, prayer for a foe, if it be sincere and heartfelt, will be accompanied with efforts to promote his happiness; if not, it is gross inconsistency, an affront to the throne of grace; a criminal removal of what is our duty wholly upon another; is saying, 'God may pardon and relieve you, I will not.' Careful, then, should we be, *how* we pray for our enemies; careful to have our conduct to correspond with our intercession."

"But is not this duty to our enemies to be performed only upon the condition of their repentance?"

"O! no! Did our Saviour wait for the repentance of his enemies before he loved them? before he offered that touching prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?'"

"But there is a passage in Luke, which I have always supposed taught the necessity of this condition; 'If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.'"

"This passage, it seems to me, has been much misapprehended; and wrongly interpreted, has prevented many

from extending love to their enemies.—Forgiveness to others appears to be used in two senses in Scripture. In the first it simply means abstinence from revenge, a general remission of the penalty of the offence; in this sense it is to be extended to all who are hostile to us, whatever may be their qualities or their conduct. It is used also in a more restricted sense for *reconciliation after a breach of friendship.* Every thing in the connexion, and in the passage itself, implies that the words which you have quoted, should be taken in this latter sense; that the forgiveness there spoken of, means a reception to our friendship of those who had offended us, a cordial admission of them again to our confidence and affection. For this, they are, of course not qualified, until they acknowledge their conduct, and lay aside their enmity. You are not bound, in this sense, to forgive those who were once your friends who have wilfully injured you, until they confess their error, and give indication of repentance. But all this is different from that love which is enjoined by the Saviour; that good will and benevolence which we should exercise to those who are still our enemies, retain their enmity, and pursue it to our injury."

"You speak of confessing errors, and asking forgiveness. Should not Christians be peculiarly attentive in acting thus towards those whom they have injured?"

"They should perform the duty promptly and without hesitation. If they have done injury, they should at once repair it; if they have defamed the character of another, they should immediately remove the cloud which rests upon his reputation. Such restitution is an essential part of repentance, and therefore, as necessary

for salvation as the restitution of property unjustly acquired."

"If we are to love our enemies only on the condition of their repentance, there would not be much difficulty in performing the duty."

"Neither much difficulty, nor, it appears to me, very much virtue. Let your enemy come and fall down before you, acknowledge your infallibility, confess that blame is to be imputed entirely to him, humbly beg you to forgive him, and promise never to repeat the act; and who would not forgive? who would be so hard-hearted as to refuse to pardon?—No! we must love those who are now our enemies, and who, far from repenting, retain their enmity; do good to those who are not only alienated, but who hate us, and will not lay aside their hatred; pray for those who are now cruelly persecuting us, and who would take away our character, property and life."

"It is a hard saying; who can hear it? a hard command; who can obey it?"

"It is. Man is naturally a vindictive being, and consequently nothing is more difficult for him than to forgive injuries; but it is the command of him who is 'the true and faithful witness,' 'love your enemies;' and if we have strong affection to him, we may have benevolence to them."

"We have, I believe, several instances in Scripture of the forgiveness of enemies, showing that the duty is practicable."

"We have many, and some quite striking. What provocations had Joseph received from his brethren—but he scarcely mentions the crime, so eager is he to announce the pardon; he said, 'I am Joseph, your brother,

whom ye sold into Egypt—now, therefore, be not angry nor grieved with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.' How fervently did Moses intercede for those who rebelled against him, and threatened to stone him, and how cordially did he forgive them! How nobly did Paul and his fellow-apostles act; 'being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.' Consider Stephen dying under the stones which were thrown upon him—he more than pardons—he prays; he seems to be more concerned for them than for himself; kneeling down he cries, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' These are only a few of the many examples found in Scripture; but enough to teach you that the duty can be performed."

"But how much better when there is no occasion for forgiveness. Happy are they who have no enemies."

"I should rather say, my friend, happy are they who have enemies, and who forgive and love them. They seem to be necessary for us; they make a strict search into our conduct, discover many imperfections of our temper; and though they exaggerate them through malice, and set them in too strong a light, yet for what they say there may often be some foundation. We ought not, then, to be entirely insensible to their railings; for they may say something out of ill-will that may be of importance for us to think of coolly in our retirement; may do us more good than ill, and lead us to discover something in our dispositions and habits which we had never before perceived. Our friends, like our hearts, often flatter us; they see not our faults, or conceal them, or soften them by their representations. Our enemies see and under-

stand more of our imperfections, and uncharitably spread them abroad. The love of the former is blind; the ill-will and malice of the latter are active, inquisitive, and quick-sighted. What a blessing to have our eyes opened, to see our defects, even though it be through the instrumentality of enemies! Unless we had them, we should want the opportunity of displaying our patience, and exhibiting that essential grace, Christian forgiveness. God has permitted them to afflict his children, and they can proceed no farther in their injurious treatment than Divine wisdom allows."

"Such a view of the subject is calculated to calm the mind; sincere and heartfelt forgiveness, (if it *can* be practised,) must be productive of happiness and peace."

"There is no doubt of it. By the magnanimity of forgiveness and love, we gain a glorious victory over our wrathful and violent passions; in yielding to which we often suffer more than from the injuries which we have received. But if we indulge our resentment, we put it in the power of our enemy to gall and embitter our mind—he fixes a dart within us which in vain we endeavour to pull out, and by every effort which we make to extract it, we exasperate and inflame the sore. It has often been said, 'revenge is sweet,' but to a calm, considerate, and pious mind, patience and forgiveness are infinitely sweeter, and afford more rational, solid, and durable enjoyment. 'There is no torment in love.' To be 'kindly affectioned' towards all, to bear no ill-will, and indulge no malice—this is peace of mind—this is happiness. How calm, composed, and cheerful is that heart, where forgiveness of injuries is the presiding spirit; where love to God has produced benevolence to man, and

subjugated the temper to the obedience of charity! Surely, we cannot be indifferent to our own comfort; we cannot regard it as a matter of no moment, whether our bosom be the seat of quietude or agitation. Surely, if, as Christians, we desire the testimony of adoption, strong faith and love, growth in grace, joy and peace in believing, we must cultivate this spirit of forgiveness."

"I desire all necessary information on this subject—are there any other precepts in Scripture relating to it?"

"There are many, besides the command of the Saviour. 'Be ye kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you; be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.'—'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive your trespasses; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.'—To keep this duty always fresh upon our minds, our Redeemer incorporates it in the Lord's Prayer; and if from our hearts we do not forgive our enemies, every time we use this prayer we imprecate eternal perdition on our souls. 'Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.'—'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord: therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

"'Heap coals of fire on his head!'—this, it seems to me, is the infliction of the severest punishment, rather than the conferment of benefits."

"No! the expression implies not an evil but a beneficial effect. It is supposed to be a metaphor taken from the smelting of metals when the ore is placed into the furnace, and fire put both under and over, that the metal may be melted; and therefore teaches us, that kind treatment will have a gracious influence upon our enemy, and be the means of melting down his heart into penitence, gratitude and love.—'Overcome evil with good;' that is, however frequently your adversary may grieve or injure you, always pay him with benefits. An enemy is more easily overcome by kindness than hostility. Against the latter, he arms himself, and summons all his power; but when he views the former, and sees his adversary returning good for evil, and blessings for curses, his mind relaxes, his wicked passions have no longer an incentive, his turbid feelings are calmed, reason predominates, conscience is permitted to speak, he is disarmed, and the weapons fall from his hand; he beholds, in him whom he has injured, a magnanimity which leads him not merely to cease his insults, but to wonder and admire. The kindness of David overcame Saul, and the meekness of Jacob melted the heart of Esau. O! my friend, how noble and dignified it is to be thus superior to all injuries and insults!"

"It is, indeed. Would that I could attain such a spirit—that by my patience, forbearance, and kindness, I could subdue my enemies! How superior is the spirit of love to that of revenge!"

"But as, I trust, you will go to the table of the Lord

on the next Sabbath, it is desirable that you should especially contemplate the example of the Saviour, and be influenced by a sense of his grace to forgive your enemies. His love, beyond any thing else—beyond all simple instructions, all abstract reasonings, all awful threatenings—invites, urges, constrains to the performance of this duty. He endured every kind of insult when he was on earth; but when 'reviled, he reviled not again, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously.' When engaged in the discharge of his ministry, he was accused of the greatest crimes, and branded with the blackest names. At the close of his life, he was apprehended as a traitor, and condemned as a malefactor. His executioners poured contempt upon all his venerable offices; as a king, they derided him by putting a mock sceptre into his hand, and crowning him with thorns, instead of a diadem; they vilified his prophetic office by covering his eyes, striking his head, and asking in cruel derision, 'who is it that smote thee?' they cast reproach upon his priestly undertaking, when, with malicious irony, they exclaimed, 'he saved others, himself he cannot save.' To render his infamy public, they hung him upon the cross, and exposed him to the gazing eyes and contumelious scoffs of spectators; yet he bore it all patiently, and 'opened not his mouth.' At the closing scene, he did 'open his mouth;' and did he ask that the thunders of God should be sent forth, and blast his enemies to endless perdition? No! lest the judge of all should pour upon them his fury, he cried, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Here learn your duty to your enemies. You have said that it is a great injury which you have received; but how tri-

fling compared with what the Son of God endured! You complain that it was inflicted by the hand of those whom you trusted and loved; but what was your most ardent affection in comparison with what Jesus felt for his murderers! You speak of your injuries being multiplied, reiterated, and persevering; but the Saviour was pursued with ferocious cruelty from the manger to the cross. Say,

> 'Now let my pains be all forgot,
> My heart no more repine;
> My injuries are not worth a thought,
> When, Lord, compared with thine.'"

Our conversation on this subject now ceased. I wished to direct his attention to the duties preparatory to the Lord's Supper, and to their necessity for a profitable communion. I remarked that the experience of all true Christians testifies, that when they entirely omit these duties, or perform them with indifference, they derive little or no benefit from the ordinance; and on the contrary, the same experience testifies that when at the sacrament they find a reconciled God and a present Redeemer; when they feel the Divine love shed abroad in their hearts, and an anticipated heaven in their souls; when they find their holy desires strengthened, and their pious resolutions confirmed; when they are lifted above the world, and have high communion with God, such seasons were preceded by a preparation that was strict, and a self-examination that was deep.—Among other duties which with us frequently preceded the Communion, was the religious fast. I always liked the practice; and though I had difficulty in persuading the whole

church, as such, regularly to observe it; in influencing the merchant to close his counting-room, the mechanic his shop, and others to lay aside their secular business; yet the day was usually announced, with the expectation that as many as possible would religiously, though privately, regard it as a season of humiliation. I have reason to know that the most devout and spiritual members did observe it with profit to themselves and benefit to the church, when performed not in a legal manner, or for self-righteous ends; and when they confided for acceptance, not in their preparatory duties, but only in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I said to him: "Let me urge you to attend to these preparatory duties to-morrow, and on the next day, when others will unite with you: look into your heart, your life, your motives; think of all the circumstances connected with your differences with others; learn to forgive your enemies; supplicate for them the Divine blessing, for nothing tends more effectually to subdue our resentment for particular persons than praying for them by name; remember, for your encouragement, what the apostle said, and use the same language, 'I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me;' depend on him; perform your duty in his strength, petitioning, expecting, and waiting for his grace; and it will not be withheld from you."

After a little time, he observed: "My understanding is convinced; I know that it is my duty to forgive and love my enemies; but my heart is so selfish, and so ready to resent unkindnesses, that nothing but Divine grace can subdue it. Pray for me, that I may 'forgive others their trespasses, even as my Heavenly Father forgives me.'"

I left him, and found him on the next Sabbath at the Lord's table. The season was one of interest and solemnity. The "constraining love of Christ" was exhibited, and seemed to melt the hearts of believers; to confirm their faith, enliven their hope, enlarge their charity, and quicken their languor; Jesus manifested himself to his children in "the breaking of bread," communicated to them his favour and grace, righteousness and spirit, while they communicated to him their thanksgiving and acceptance, penitence and love. The forgiveness of injuries was alluded to in the discourse; but in the address at the table was in this manner urged and enforced:

"My brethren, in partaking of this feast of love, remember what Jesus did for his foes, and learn to forgive and love your enemies. The sufferings which he endured, produced not insensibility to the interests of those ungrateful men who had inflicted them; the voice of charity was heard from him, and the words which proceeded from those lips that were ready to breathe their last sigh, were, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' They deserved a different fate. If the murder of a fellow creature is considered a most heinous offence, what vengeance must not those have deserved, who slew 'the Prince of life?' From this vengeance Jesus lifted up his voice to save them; he asked the pardon not only of this sin, but of all their other offences; they had treated him as a criminal—he prayed that they might find acceptance in the sight of God; they were exulting in his destruction—he desired to rejoice in their salvation. When men forgive their enemies, it is often when they have lost all power of aveng-

ing themselves; but Jesus could now have sent forth his lightnings and scattered his foes. Men are sometimes prompted to forgive by the appearance of repentance in the person who has injured them; but the lips of Christ's enemies were, at this moment full of cursing and bitterness. Think of the time when our Lord offered this prayer. In the first moments after we have been injured, resentment is strong; we can think of nothing but the ill usage which we have received; and at once to forgive those who have treated us so unworthily, would appear to many as an act of meanness and injustice; time must be given for the tempest of passion to subside, ere the still small voice of reason and charity can be heard. But it was immediately after our Lord was fixed to the cross, that he offered up the prayer; the hills around Jerusalem had scarcely ceased echoing back the cry, 'Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him,' when he said, 'Father, forgive them.'—Let this prayer of a dying Redeemer incline you to exercise the spirit of forgiveness. What fellowship have the unforgiving, malicious, and revengeful, with such a Saviour? and where, in their conduct, is any conformity to his death?—Say not, 'I have not deserved the ill usage which I have met with?' Did your Saviour deserve the insults which were heaped upon him?—Say not, 'Must I give my enemy such triumph over me?' In forgiving him, you 'heap coals of fire on his head;' you turn his enmity into kindness.—Say not, 'The spirit and the maxims of the world are opposed to this temper.' I know it, but 'ye are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world.' Shall the derision of fools have more power over you than the prayer of a dying Saviour? Your

own peace will be promoted by this spirit of benevolence; for no passion tortures the heart like revenge. 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' Delay not this duty—at once suppress all resentful feelings. Pride may demand the submission of an enemy, ere you love him; but shall Christian charity suffer such a counsellor to direct or impede her movements? Let us all possess this forgiving spirit before we lay hold of the consecrated symbols. We are of the number of those enemies for whom Jesus died, for whom he prayed, and whom he has reconciled to God. Place yourselves in imagination between your Saviour on the one side, and your enemies on the other; listen to him on the cross—view him also on his throne of judgment; hear him declaring that those who forgive not their enemies shall sink into endless despair—then turn to these enemies, and be constrained by the charity and terrors of the Lord, to forgive and love them. Go to the foot of the cross where the bleeding Saviour pronounces the remission of your offences, and there pardon your offending brethren; there embrace your mortal enemies, and disarm them by your tears and love. The same blood which implores pardon for you, demands of you pardon for them; and if it blot out the offences which render you criminal before God, it should efface all those offences which they have committed against you. Let us all look to Calvary, and while hearing the prayer which Jesus makes for his murderers, let us offer it for our enemies: 'Father, forgive them.'"

A day or two after the Communion, I saw the injured and offended man, and found him completely subdued; ready to extend forgiveness to his enemies; to love and

pray for them, and to do them good. He spoke of the participation of the Lord's Supper as being to him the most profitable season that he had ever enjoyed; and observed: "After you left me last week, when you conversed so fully on the subject of forgiveness, I saw, in all their force, the motives and reasons of the duty; but I could not perform it; there was in me an unaccountable reluctance to forgive, but a reluctance which was my burden and grief; though I wept and struggled with it, the demon of resentment maintained his place in my heart. It was not until I came to the Lord's table, and was deeply sensible of his love in dying for sinners, and praying for his murderers, that I felt wrath entirely driven from my heart, and that I was able fully to forgive and love those who had injured me. I find that there is nothing so well calculated to touch the soul, to strike all the springs of action, and to affect with persuasive energy, as the love of Christ. When that was exhibited and applied by the Holy Spirit, every power of my soul seemed to spring forward to glorify the Redeemer. I thought, 'Did he who is high above all height, humble himself to be made of a woman, and born in a stable, that he might admit me into the family of God; and shall I ever look down with contempt upon others, or entertain of myself haughty and arrogant thoughts? Was all manner of evil spoken of him—his name vilified by blasphemous tongues—his conduct blackened by the foulest aspersions; and shall I be unwilling to bear reproaches and persecutions, and to bear them, as he did, with patience and meekness? Did he lay down his precious life for his enemies; and shall not I suffer for my enemies all that is required, and learn, like him, to

rejoice in conferring benefits upon them? Did he, when contending with innumerable woes upon the cross, pray for his executioners, and shelter them against the Divine anger; and shall not I offer the same prayer, 'Father, forgive them.'—Such were my thoughts and meditations at the Lord's table, and, through the grace of the Redeemer, I forgave from my heart all the wrongs and injuries which had been done to me; and through the same grace, I hope to carry out in my future conduct the principles there felt, the vows there made, the prayers there offered."

I replied to him: "I do not wonder at the effect which the love of Christ has had upon you; it has always had an influence in promoting the practice of piety. When it is shed abroad in the soul by the Holy Spirit, it diffuses itself through every faculty, and extends to every duty, until the whole heart is filled with the image, and the whole conduct regulated by the law of love. Try, now, to be reconciled to your enemies—make every reasonable sacrifice for this object; but if they refuse all overtures, remember that they cannot injure you, if God be your friend. They cannot erase your name from the book of life, suspend the influences of heaven, exclude the comforts of the Spirit, deprive you of the hopes of glory, or wrest from you your faith or love. They will indeed injure you if they can inspire you with revenge, and thus cause you to offend God; but if you from the heart forgive and love them, they are harmless, and only claim your compassion and prayers. Though their injuries may strike and even wound you, yet these wounds will not fester nor corrupt, will bring little smart with them, readily heal by the application of

Christian forgiveness, and leave behind them no visible scar."

"I hope that I shall learn hereafter to keep a strict guard over my conduct; to gain that forbearance of disposition which allows of no irritation; to acquire that command not only over my words and actions, but over my feelings and emotions, that shall make me patient amidst insults and injuries; in short, as the apostle says, 'to be angry, and sin not;' for I suppose that anger is a lawful passion when rigidly restrained and regulated."

"If it is ever allowable, it must be only under very peculiar circumstances, (circumstances not likely often to occur,) and even then in none but those who have attained great mastery over themselves. It may possibly be allowed as a *principle*, but the moment it becomes a *passion* it is sinful; persons therefore of an irritable temper should never permit themselves to be angry at all, for they can never be so but in a degree immoderate and unreasonable. Very few ought to attempt it; it requires not only greatness of soul, but high eminence in piety. It may always be exercised safely against ourselves; here we cannot be guilty of undue severity, or of manifesting our feelings without cause.—What is the experience of the Christian in the indulgence of anger towards others? Seldom is his conscience in perfect peace after the exercise of this passion; he feels that it is too high a stimulant for his mental constitution; that he needs something to calm and quiet him; that he is degraded in the estimation of himself, and lessened in the esteem of others; that he is even deprived of that honourable badge by which he is distin-

guished from the world. To be a peacemaker; to be more ready to chastise his own faults than those of others; to return blessing for cursing, and to be clothed with humility—these are the things which distinguish him from a votary of the world. If others perceive that we are easily actuated by the risings of anger, they will take knowledge of us that we 'have been' any where and with any one but the meek and lowly Jesus.—In a world like this, it is exceedingly desirable that Christians, by subduing the passion of resentment and cultivating the affection of benevolence; by exhibiting the true dignity of religion and soaring above the petty irritations of life, should be careful to excite no open hostility or opposition. It is agreeable to what the apostle says: 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men'—though it be but barely possible, we should labour after it and be at peace with all, whether they may, or may not be, at peace with us. In consequence of the peculiar dispositions of men, enemies will naturally rise up even against those who act as wisely and prudently as possible. Friendship is a plant that needs to be cultivated with great care; but enemies, like weeds, voluntarily spring up, without culture or toil. Let us not add to the number by our folly and misconduct; let us do nothing to excite the ill-will, and rouse the enmity of others. 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.'—Let us avoid, as far as possible, the company of passionate men. We learn the manners and drink in the spirit of those with whom we are conversant; like the chameleon, we take a tincture from that which is near us. The wise man's advice is

therefore salutary: 'Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to thy soul.' Let the meek and lowly be our chosen companions; we shall learn from them that none live so happily as those who have the government of their passions; that none are so amiable as those who have the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. If, in performing our duties to our fellow-men, we were to act upon the rule which our Saviour prescribes, 'Do unto others as you would have others do to you,' how happy and useful should we be! It is a rule which is easy to be understood; which carries with it great evidence to the conscience; which, when applied, secures our neighbour from injury and ourselves from guilt; which is calculated to awaken us to repentance when we have transgressed it; which extends to all ranks and characters of men. Its observance would teach us tenderness to the unhappy; incline us to reprove with gentleness and punish with mercy; dispose us never to censure others without just reason, or publish doubtful suspicions of their guilt. O! what a lustre would be cast on the religion of Jesus and all its professors, if this rule were generally observed! But alas! it lies silently in our Bibles, and we hear it not; or in our bosoms and we awake it not; we read it in Scripture and do not remember it, and daily injure our fellow-men without remorse. O! that the spirit of God would write this sacred law of justice more deeply and effectually on the tablets of our hearts; that the religion of Jesus might look like itself, all amiable and holy!"

We had some further conversation on the character of those who had injured him, and the means which might

be prudently employed to effect a reconciliation, and then separated. For several years I continued my acquaintance with him, and found that he succeeded in subduing his naturally hasty and violent temper; that he triumphed over his adversaries by disregarding their injuries, or returning kindness for insults; that he had acquired such a habit of self-control that he never spoke till he was cool, saying, *the man who commands his tongue has no difficulty in governing his temper.* He attributed this victory to the frequent contemplation of the character of Christ, and the influence which the Saviour's dying love had upon his soul.

1. We perceive from the circumstance here related, *how difficult a duty it is for a Christian to forgive his enemies.* He who had for many years been a disciple of Jesus, acknowledged that it was the most difficult moral duty to which he had ever been called; that after he was convinced of its justice he found that he was averse to its performance; that he knew that it required all the humility, faith, and self-denial of which he was capable, to bring down his spirit to the Saviour's command; and that for many days he was engaged in this painful and continued contest, before he yielded. None but they who have the mind and spirit of Jesus can obey the precept, "love your enemies;" nothing but supreme affection to God, implanted by the Holy Spirit, can inspire men with such benevolence as to enable them to obey a command so insupportable to corrupt nature. It is a lofty eminence, which cannot be reached without constant and laborious climbing; a duty that cannot be performed without much resolution and watchfulness, many "strong cryings and tears" at a throne of grace;

much self-sacrifice and painful mortification of the sins of the heart. But "through Christ strengthening" it can be performed; many instances of the dead and the living attest it.—It is related of Sir Matthew Hale that an enemy who had done him much injury once applied to him for legal advice in the settlement of his estate. He gave the advice, and when a fee was offered, refused it. When afterwards asked how he could use one so kindly who had wronged him so grievously, he replied, "I thank God that I have learned to forgive and love my enemies."—It was said of Archbishop Cranmer: "Do my Lord of Canterbury an injury, and you make him a friend as long as you live."—The testimony of Bishop Burnet respecting Archbishop Leighton is well known: "After an intimate acquaintance with the archbishop for many years, and after being with him by day and by night, at home and abroad, in public and in private, I must say that I never heard an idle word drop from his lips; I never saw him in any temper in which I myself would not wish to be found at death."—It is recorded of Fletcher of Madeley: "He was by nature a man of strong passions, and prone to anger in particular; insomuch that he has frequently spent the greater part of the night bathed in tears, imploring victory over his own spirit; and he did not strive in vain. He did obtain the victory in a very eminent degree; yea, so thoroughly had grace subdued nature, that for many years before his death, I believe that he was never observed by any one, friend or foe, to be out of temper on any provocation whatever."—The exhibition of forgiveness and benevolence in the last hours of Thomas Scott I have always admired, and am never weary in

reading. "His mind," says his biographer, "dwelt much upon love; God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Faith worketh by love. He seemed full of affection and tenderness to all around him. 'One evidence,' he said, 'I *have* of meetness for heaven. I feel much love to all mankind—to *every* man upon earth—to those who have most opposed and slandered me.' To his servant he said, 'I thank you for all your kindness to me; if at any time I have been hasty and short, forgive me, and pray to God to forgive me; but lay the blame upon *me*, not upon religion.' His tender affection for us is astonishing in such a state of extreme suffering, and cuts us to the heart. He begged his curate to forgive him if he had been occasionally rough and sharp. 'I meant it for your good, but like every thing of mine, it was mixed with sin; impute it not, however, to my religion, but to my want of religion.' He is so gentle and loving—it is so delightful to attend upon him—that his servants, finding themselves in danger of contention which should wait upon him, agreed to take it by turns, that each might have her due share of the pleasure and benefit; and yet he is continually begging our forgiveness for his want of patience and thankfulness. His kindness and affection to all who approached him were carried to the greatest height, and showed themselves in a singularly minute attention to all their feelings, and whatever might be for their comfort, to a degree that was quite affecting—especially when he was suffering so much himself, often in mind, as well as in body. There was an astonishing absence of selfish feelings; even in his worst hours he thought of the health of us all; observed if we

sat up long, and insisted on our retiring; and was much afraid of paining or hurting us in any way. His Commentary being mentioned, he said: 'There is one feeling I cannot have if I would; those that have opposed my doctrine have slandered me sadly, but I cannot feel any resentment; I can only love and pity them, and pray for their salvation. I never did feel any resentment towards them; I only regret that I did not more ardently long and pray for their salvation.' "—"*Here is the patience of the saints.*"

How nearly conformed to his Master was Brainard, and how much of the glory of Heaven was shed down upon him when he experienced what he records in his Diary: "In the evening God was pleased to grant me Divine sweetness in prayer; especially in the duty of intercession. I think that I never felt so much kindness and love to those who, I have reason to think, are my *enemies*—spent an hour in prayer with great intenseness and freedom, and with the most soft and tender affection toward mankind. I longed that those who, I have reason to think, owe me ill-will, might be eternally happy. It seemed refreshing to think of meeting them in heaven, how much soever they had injured me on earth; had no disposition to insist upon any confession from them, in order to reconciliation, and the exercise of love and kindness to them. O! it is an emblem of heaven itself to love all the world with a love of kindness, forgiveness and benevolence; to find our souls sedate, mild and meek; to be void of all evil surmisings and suspicions, and scarce able to think evil of any man upon any occasion; to find our hearts simple, open and free to those who look upon us with a different eye! *My soul rested*

in God ; and I found I wanted no other refuge or friend. While my soul thus trusts in him, all things seem to be at peace with me, even the stones of the earth."

We cannot forbear mentioning another instance found in "Pierre's Studies of Nature." "In the last war in Germany, a captain of cavalry was ordered out on a foraging party. He put himself at the head of his troop, and marched to the quarter assigned him. It was a solitary valley, in which hardly any thing but woods could be seen. In the midst of it stood a little cottage; on perceiving it, he went up and knocked at the door; out comes an ancient Moravian, with a beard silvered by age. 'Father,' says the officer, 'show me a field, where I may set my troopers a-foraging.'—'Presently,' replied the Moravian. The good old man walked before, and conducted them out of the valley. After a quarter of an hour's march, they found a fine field of barley. 'There is the very thing we want,' says the captain.—'Have patience for a few minutes,' replies his guide; 'you shall be satisfied.' They went on, and at the distance of about a quarter of a league farther, they arrived at another field of barley. The troop immediately dismounted, cut down the grain, trussed it up, and remounted. The officer, upon this, says to the conductor: 'Father, you have given yourself and us unnecessary trouble; the first field was much better than this.'—'True,' replied the good old man; '*but it was not mine.*'"

This goes directly to the heart, and is an exhibition of the genuine spirit of religion; a beautiful evidence of that love which is the "fulfilling of the law," and which "seeketh not her own;" it is *Christian* benevolence,

"*the same mind which was in Christ Jesus*," having him for the author, and his conduct as the model.

The man of the world has taken pleasure in resenting an injury and exercising revenge, but the "injured man subdued" by the religion of Jesus has forgotten all wrongs and returned good for evil:

> "Some write their wrongs in marble—he more just,
> Stooped down serene and wrote them in the dust;
> Trod under foot, the sport of every wind,
> Swept from the earth, and blotted from his mind;
> There buried in the dust he let them lie,
> And *grieved they could not 'scape th' Almighty's eye.*"

2. *Nothing tends so effectually to cherish love and forgiveness to enemies as the contemplation of the character and death of the Redeemer.*

The offended man, whose conduct we have considered, was convinced that it is one of the first duties of Christianity to forgive those who have injured us; but he could not, as he acknowledged, be brought to practise it until he beheld Jesus Christ as a model for his imitation; not until he was strongly impressed with a sense of his dying love could he extinguish his resentment and extend pardon to his foes.—Such has always been the influence of the love of Christ; it persuades when all other arguments are ineffectual—disarms the violent and subdues the stubborn. We must bring our minds under the influence of redeeming grace, ascend the hill of Calvary, and gaze upon that scene of love; and then our cold affections will melt, our hard hearts soften, and all the cruel selfishness of our nature dissolve into gentleness. We have read of martyrs forgiving their enemies and praying for them; but where did they imbibe

this spirit? Where did they learn this lesson? Whence came the generous tear that dropped on the instrument of death, and the dying prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge?" The lesson was learned at the cross; the spirit was the spirit of Jesus, "which wrought" in them "mightily."

"How hardly man the lesson learns,
To smile and bless the hand that spurns;
To see the blow, to feel the pain,
And render only love again.
One had it, but He came from heaven;
Reviled, rejected, and betrayed,
No curse he breathed, no plaint he made;
But when in death's dark pang he sighed,
Prayed for his murderers, and died."

CHAPTER V.

THE HARDENED CONVICT.

—"Revenge we find
The abject pleasure of an abject mind."

The minister of Christ should delight to follow the example of him who came to heal the broken-hearted, to hush the sorrowful sighs of the prisoner, to give deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the dungeon to them that are bound. He will gladly enter the prison, and bearing the word of God in his hand, and the message of salvation on his lips, endeavour to do good to its criminal inmates, sensible that even for these guilty wretches there is plenteous redemption, and that through the agency of the Spirit they may be brought to the light and liberty of the sons of God. How interesting to pious beneficence are such scenes! Never does the minister of Christ appear more like his Divine Master than when he is spreading blessings through such a receptacle of woe; conveying religion to minds sunk in ignorance, and stupefied by vice; softening the hardened heart, awakening the slumbering conscience, exciting the feeling and prayer of penitence, and opening the soul to all the affecting views of the Gospel.

Especially do those who have been convicted of a capital offence, and who are under sentence of death, require attention—immured within the gloomy walls of a prison, deprived of liberty, confined to a lonely cell, often loaded

with irons, and just about to launch into eternity, they need the sympathy, prayers, and instructions of a Christian teacher.

Learning that there was a person of this character in prison, who was soon to be executed, I sought an opportunity of visiting the poor criminal. Without difficulty I gained access, and found the convict, a female of about twenty years of age, who had been brought up in great seclusion in the country, and evidently in the midst of much ignorance and vice. She had been tried for poisoning a family, was found guilty upon the clearest evidence, and condemned to be hung in a few weeks. Her appearance, even at first sight, was disagreeable and repulsive—on a closer view, her countenance disclosed a dark and sullen expression; while a quick and rapid motion of the eye indicated the existence of inward feelings, which no outward art could conceal.

I commenced the conversation by telling her that I had heard of her situation; that I truly pitied her; and had come to endeavour to do her good.

She replied, "I did not know that there was a single person in the place who had any care or feeling for me. I am glad that you are come, for I am very lonely."

"I am a minister of the gospel, and would endeavour to benefit your soul. I have enquired into your case, and find that with an impartial trial, with every opportunity of defence, you were convicted of the awful crime with which you were charged, and sentenced to be hung. You have only a little more than a fortnight in which to live; and all your time should be devoted to preparation for eternity, for there is no hope of your being pardoned."

This last remark evidently affected her, and led her

to ask with earnestness : "O ! do you think that there is no hope for me ?"

"No hope from man—no hope of escape from the punishment of death. I have learned all the particulars, and assure you that you must die at the time appointed ; no petitions for your pardon will have any effect ; what the judge said, when he passed the sentence was true, that there is no hope of mercy for you, but at a higher than an earthly tribunal."

"But I am not guilty. I never did what they charge me with, but I suppose that I must die. I have no friends to defend me, or who care for me."

"Yes ! every thing on your trial was done to defend you ; but the evidence of your guilt was so clear, that no one doubted it. You have friends ; we who visit you are interested ; desire your salvation, and wish you to be prepared for another and better world. You have been condemned by an earthly tribunal ; you are also condemned by the law of God ; you are under its sentence and curse—'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.' If one violation of the Divine law expose you to a curse, what a multitude of curses are ready to fall upon your soul ! It was truly awful to hear an earthly judge commanding you to be hanged by the neck until you were DEAD, how much more terrible to hear the Almighty Judge pronounce that unalterable sentence, 'Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire.' You are soon to suffer the punishment of temporal death, and you are liable to eternal death, the vengeance of the Most High—'his wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men.' Who knows the weight

and power of the wrath of God? At his rebuke, rocks melt—the earth quakes—devils tremble. How can you endure the severity of his vengeance—not only for a day, a month, or a year, but through the ages of eternity? Yet this is the doom of those who know not God, and obey not the Gospel. 'Can thine heart endure, or thine hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee, saith the Lord of hosts? I, the Lord, have spoken, and will do it.' "

I spoke solemnly and earnestly, for I really felt for her; but I perceived that these awful truths had no effect; that she hardened her heart against all instructions, warnings, and threatenings. Not objecting to prayer, I commended her soul to God; but during this exercise, she was as unfeeling as ever—there was no self-reproach, no remorse for the past, no dread of the future. Leaving her, I was painfully dejected, and almost discouraged; I indeed wondered that one in her state could be so utterly insensible; one who, in a few days, must be in eternity, and, dying in her present state, must groan under the agonies of absolute despair.

The next day I again visited her, and found her situation the same, her feelings perfectly callous to all the circumstances in which she was placed. Thinking that she might be an atheist or infidel, I asked if she believed in the existence of a God. She acknowledged that there was a God who had created and preserved, and who would certainly judge her.

"Do you believe in a future state—that your soul is immortal—that it will live after the body dies?"

She answered with emphasis, "Yes, I am sure that my soul will live—they cannot kill *that*—it *will* live;

and see and know many things, and be concerned with many persons."

After these remarks, she sunk into her usual apathy. I endeavoured to rouse her, and, though painful to me, exhibited "the terrors of the Lord," thinking that these were needed to move and affect her.

"You say that you believe that there is a God—he is almighty, and cannot be resisted; holy, and infinitely hates sin; all-seeing, and perfectly acquainted with your conduct—a God against whom you have sinned; whose laws you have broken; whose mercies you have despised; whose spirit you have resisted. By death, which is rapidly approaching, you will be brought into the presence of this God; and O! what a death is before you! Its terrors are increased when it comes by violent means; by the hand of the executioner, in the sight of gazing multitudes; and as the wages and desert of your crimes. It is now no time to dissemble; you stand on the verge of life—the principles of religion require you to confess your guilt—he only who 'confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy.' Do not then die with a lie on your lips. You say that your soul is immortal—it must, then, when your body dies, go to heaven or to hell. In your present state, you can have no hope of the former; and can you think of going to the latter? Can you form any conception of its torments? Can you conceive what horror, anguish, and despair reign in that dreadful place? The soul is separated from God, who alone can give happiness; and from Christ, who alone is the Saviour of sinners; and from all hope of restoration to the Divine favour. *There* is remorse of conscience—a quick and lively remembrance of all that occurred on earth—a

sight, 'though afar off,' of the glories of heaven, and an impassible gulf between—the infliction of Divine wrath, termed in Scripture, the 'fierce' and 'everlasting' wrath of Almighty God. He has prepared this punishment, and inflicts it upon his enemies—they fall under his strokes—they suffer it without any mitigation or end—they will never be weary of sinning, nor God ever weary of punishing. Can you bear this? In the language of Scripture, 'Can you stand before the indignation of the Lord; and can you abide the fierceness of his anger?'"

All was in vain—she evidently listened to me—seemed to understand—and may have believed me, but sullen apathy still marked her character; she had not the least sense of awe for that God in whose presence she was so soon to appear.

After a pause of some time, I turned to the consolations of the Gospel, thinking that if she would not feel in contemplating Jesus Christ as an Almighty Judge, she might be softened by considering him as a gracious Saviour.

"If you should ask if there is any hope of your salvation, any possibility of the door of heaven being opened to you, I say that there is hope for sinners; Christ, the all-glorious Son of God, pitied their deplorable case, and came into the world to relieve them; nay, he came into their place, and stood in their room. Because we had broken the Divine law, he fulfilled it in all its perfection; because we deserved punishment, he sustained it in its utmost extremity. He submitted to scorn, reproach, and persecution, though all angels were commanded to worship him; he was condemned to death, the most

shameful and tormenting death, far more shameful, and unspeakably more tormenting, than the one which you must soon undergo; he suffered inconceivable pains and anguish in his soul from the indignation of God. Here is your door of hope—if you feel that you are a sinner, a vile and worthless sinner; that you have not only nothing good, but much and grievous guilt, here in Christ there is hope. He died for the 'ungodly,' the 'unjust,' the 'lost;' and if you were the very chief of sinners, that might make you unpardonable before man, but would be no difficulty with Christ, and should be no hindrance to your believing in him. Only come as a poor, undone creature, and you will find him able and 'willing to save, even unto the uttermost;' for he promises, 'him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;' be his guilt ever so great, I will not reject, nor deny his suit. Go to a great man on earth; beg him to use his interest in your behalf, and he will take no notice of you; go to your earthly judge or governour; entreat him on your bended knees to pardon you—he cannot—must not—the laws forbid him—not so with Jesus Christ—tenderly compassionate, and infinitely condescending, he invites you to come to him, with the assurance that he will not abhor nor reject you. 'It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' He came, not to judge or condemn; not merely to teach, but to save—that was his business, to save sinners, the very worst of sinners. It is 'a faithful saying,' God's report and testimony, and therefore one on which you may rely; it is true, and therefore you may trust it, good, and therefore it deserves your attention. Observe that it is for great sin-

ners, for prison sinners, like yourself, for condemned and convicted sinners."

If I could have seen the least feeling under this exhibition of God's love; the least symptom of fear, the least pang of conscience, I should have been encouraged; but no threat of God, no invitation of the Saviour, no consideration of any kind could move her.

I thought, "Can this be a rational being capable of feeling? can she believe that there is a God, and that her soul is immortal? Has the Spirit so long striven with her, and been so long resisted, that he has entirely withdrawn? If angels can weep, surely their tears must flow in contemplating the carelessness and insensibility of such an undone and ruined being."

After remaining some time in silence, I felt that there was hope only in God; and coming to his "throne of grace," entreated him to bring to pass, by his power, what the skill and wisdom of man could not effect; to open her eyes, that she might see her condition; to soften her heart, that she might bewail her sins; to turn her course, that she might flee from the wrath to come; to reveal to her his character, that she might no longer remain remorseless and unconcerned; to make her, even at the eleventh hour, a trophy of his rich, free, and sovereign grace.

After the prayer, observing a Bible in the cell, I asked if she could read; replying in the affirmative, I marked the fifty-first Psalm, the fifteenth chapter of Luke, containing the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and the third chapter of the gospel by John, and entreated her to read them attentively, and to tell me her opinion of them, when I next visited her.

When leaving her, I met with the jailer, a pious and devout man, and said to him : "What should we think of that poor criminal? She is to be hung in a few days, and yet is as insensible as a stone. I have never met with an instance of such perfect apathy. Is she insane? She cannot be an idiot, for she can read."

"Did she tell you that she could read? She has been guilty of deliberate falsehood; she knows not a single letter; in my conversation, I have found precisely what you have, such hardness of heart, and searedness of conscience, as make me sometimes think that she is idiotic, and therefore not a fit subject for capital punishment. To-morrow the court will meet to examine that point, and you will be cited as a witness."

The next day the court did meet; I testified to her conduct, while I visited her; a physician also was present, as a witness, who, after closely examining her, expressed his opinion. The court decided without hesitation that she was no idiot, but a moral and responsible agent; that the circumstance of her being "past feeling," instead of a palliation, was an aggravation of her crimes.

Not long after this, I was again in her cell, urging her to prepare for that death which was so soon to come upon her. When I spoke of its agonies and horrors, its consequences here, reducing the body to darkness, inactivity and corruption; its consequences hereafter, conveying the immortal soul into eternity, there was not the least degree of terror or concern. I could not account for it; I asked myself a hundred times, "Where there is so strange an effect, what is the cause? She is no atheist,

no disbeliever in a future state, no lunatic, nor idiot—what is the cause?"

I continued visiting her almost daily. When the awful day arrived on which the punishment pronounced upon her was to be publicly inflicted, I was in the prison some minutes before her departure, saw her dressed for the occasion, and found her even cheerful at the prospect of death. She kneeled when I committed her soul to God in prayer, but refused to answer any questions—entered the vehicle that was to bear her to the place of execution, and sat upon her coffin, without emotion; quietly surveyed the crowd as she was going to the gallows, and ascended the scaffold with great composure. Not a nerve in her body trembled. While solemnity was on every countenance, there was none on hers. While all around were weeping, not one tear was shed by her. Just before her arms were bound, her eyes covered, and the fatal cord placed around her neck, the mystery was solved—the oft-repeated question, "*what is the cause?*" was answered. She cried with exulting emotion: "*I am going to die; and when I am dead, I will haunt that man, J—— T——, who was the witness against me at the trial, who brought me to this death. I will haunt him every night—I'll give him no rest—I'll torment him every way till I kill him; the sooner I'm gone the better—he shall know the worst—he shall know it this very night.*" Her eyes glistened with joy while expressing her feelings—her countenance beamed with rapture at the thought of quickly revenging her enemy. She left the world with exultation and triumph.

A few reflections are added to the foregoing narrative.

1. We perceive in it the *evil of superstition*—of that kind of superstition which leads to the belief that the souls of the dead return to our world, visit their acquaintance, retain their former passions, and have the power of avenging injuries. This was the belief of the poor criminal whom we have considered. From her conversation in her last hours, and from what I learned afterwards, it was evident that she fully admitted the reality of spectres and apparitions; that she had long cherished these delusions of the imagination; that reared in the midst of ignorance, and deprived of a knowledge of Scripture, she had early imbibed this sentiment, and united the grossest superstition with the wildest fanaticism. Such superstitious notions were the reason why Divine truth made no impression on her; why she was regarded by some as an idiot; and why the crime for which she suffered death was so coolly and deliberately committed. How ruinous to the understanding and heart are such false ideas! How they enfetter the mind, corrupt the feelings, encourage ignorance, cherish vindictiveness, and even deify those passions which are the disgrace of human nature!

2. We see strongly displayed, in the incident related, the *nature of revenge.*

There is no passion more hostile to a man's happiness, and more frequently forbidden by reason and Scripture, than this; and yet there is none to which the depravity of human nature more powerfully incites us. How much blood has been shed by this demon, how many thousands have groaned under the miseries which it has inflicted, what countless multitudes has it converted into ferocious monsters! In the subject of this narrative, how strong

was this restless and cruel spirit—what a secret, calm, fixed resolution did she make to avenge herself upon one who she thought had injured her and caused her infamy—what sacrifices did she make for this purpose, what dark stratagems, gross deceptions, unworthy designs, were perpetrated to effect her object! Every thing was forgotten but this—God—judgment—heaven—hell—all were absorbed in this ruling passion.

The instance of the Spaniard, who sought revenge upon an enemy, and resolved to destroy him, has often been quoted. This enemy, apprized of his design, removed to another town at a distance; but he had been there only a day or two, before he found that his foe had arrived. He removed to several parts of the kingdom remote from each other, but soon perceived that his deadly pursuer was near him. At last he went to South America, where he enjoyed his security but for a short time; his unrelenting avenger came, and effected his purpose. This instance, striking as it is, is not so illustrative of the power of revenge as the one before us, where the subject of this passion cheerfully suffered all the hardship of imprisonment, and on the scaffold panted for death, to satiate her malice, and assail, in a manner more than human, her hated foe.

Who, in view of the consequences of this passion, will ever harbour a spirit of revenge; attempt to wrest the sceptre from the hands of the Ruler of the Universe; and to grasp his right and prerogative of inflicting punishment? Why should the soul of any be so infected as never to be happy until he has made another miserable?

3. We learn that *a calm and happy death is, in itself, no evidence of a safe departure.*

The unhappy subject of this narrative, though guilty of awful crimes, had no fear of death, no anguish of conscience, no horror in anticipation of eternity—on the contrary, she experienced peace in view of her departure, and emotions of rapture at the last moment. This is not a solitary instance; surprising fortitude at death has been evinced by those who had no knowledge of the Gospel, and no preparation for eternity. The savage Indian, when taken prisoner, often endures without a groan the most excruciating tortures, dares his conquerors, amidst the bitterness of death, to do their utmost, and affects to triumph over every additional pang. It is a proud and determined obstinacy, occasioned by a desire to foil the gratification which a pusillanimous conduct, and an apparent sense of suffering might afford to his tormentors; an obstinacy which yields him a species of mental revenge, when no longer able to exert his physical strength against his foes. Heathen superstition has often led its votary to submit calmly to the severest bodily mortifications, to remain long in postures the most painful, and to cast himself beneath the ponderous car of his infernal idol; it has caused even females to place themselves, with unparalleled composure, on the funeral pile, until reduced to ashes with the corpses of their husbands.

In Christian lands, the same fearlessness is sometimes seen, when there is no well-founded hope of heaven. The soldier braves the approach of death through love of fame; and the fanatic, as in the case before us, greets it with rapture. Hume was sportive in his last hours, and Rousseau, contemplating his dissolution with pleasure, said, just before he expired: "Ah! how happy

a thing it is to die when one has no reason for remorse or self-reproach."

The Scripture no where lays stress upon the feelings which distinguish the hour of death, nor regards them as an evidence of real religion; on the contrary, it directs us to a proof far more unequivocal—to the tenour of a holy life, spent in conformity to the word of God. For the want of attention to this scriptural test, the nature of a Christian death is often mistaken; mere tranquillity, or even strong hope, is not, in itself, a clear indication of the right state of the soul. Why should a different proof of the reality of religion be assumed for the hour of dissolution from that which is presented for the vigour of health? In both cases, the excellence of one grace or virtue stamps not the character, but the possession of all the Christian graces; the uniform and complete conformity of the temper and conduct to the sacred Scriptures. In the death-bed scene of the "Devout Widow," which we have contemplated, no peculiar or new graces were called into action—the solemnity of the circumstances, and the greatness of the occasion, only heightened and exalted those that already existed—faith was more lively than usual—assurance more steadfast—repentance more deep—humility more profound—resignation more complete—love to God more perfect—and obedience to his will more conspicuous.

Too many think that if a man depart from the world willingly and without reluctance, he therefore departs safely; as if death makes a complete change in his nature as well as in his condition; as if that which is the vehicle to another state of being has the power to qualify us for that state; as if that which conveys us to a new

world gives us, if we be calm and easy, a new heart, and transforms us into the Divine image. But there may be calmness where there is no safety. In my visits to the beds of the dying, I have more than once seen those who were strangers to the power of godliness expiring with composure and resignation; I have seen those who during life wholly neglected religion, or who disgraced its profession by inconsistency, leaving the world with exultation when I desired to see tears; talking of joys unspeakable when I would rather hear the sighs of contrition; departing full of confidence and rapture when I wished to behold self-loathing, deep humiliation and unfeigned repentance. To witness such scenes is one of the trials of a pastor's life. If he is cheered and animated by the sight of the Christian who in life honored the Redeemer, departing with "hopes full of immortality," founded upon the grace and atonement of Immanuel, how distressing to view such death-bed scenes as we have described; how afflictive to strive to remove the delusion, and to strive in vain; to labour to subvert the foundation on which calmness and composure are resting, and to labour in vain! Those who have known the subjects of this delusion in life, and who see them in death; who compare their sentiments, character and conduct then with those which are exhibited now, have little difficulty in tracing their quietness to its true source. Sometimes it is the effect of a false system of religion—sometimes of the vain flatteries of self-love—sometimes of the desire to be released from excessive pain—sometimes of equability of temper or firmness of nerve—sometimes it is affectation; and the heart is racked, while the deportment is calm—and sometimes it is

a punishment for the long neglect of the warning voice of truth; the result of judicial blindness, in which God says to conscience and the spirit, "let them alone;" a blindness which prevents them from seeing the precipice into which they are plunging.

Such instances of composure in death where there has been no piety in life, instead of weakening, should strengthen our faith in the word of God; for that word declares that the wicked often "have no bands in their death;" it teaches, in several places and in various modes, by parables and direct assertions, that many who confidently expected heaven shall be disappointed; intimating that this expectation, and the calmness resulting from it, shall extend to the last hour.

We may be sure, then, that there is no really happy death but that which conducts to a happy immortality—no "putting off the body," if we have not "put on the Lord Jesus"—no comfort in escaping from the miseries of time, till we have obtained a well-grounded hope of a blissful immortality.—No moral truth has fewer exceptions than this: "*as a man lives, so will he die.*"

CHAPTER VI.

THE NAVAL APOSTATE.

"Hast never seen the death of th' apostate?
'Twas anguish, terror, darkness without bow;
But O! it had a most convincing tongue,
A potent oratory, that secured most mute attention."

Apostasy from the religion of Christ, by an open denial in words, or by a virtual declaration in act, presents to the pious mind one of the most awful scenes that can be imagined. At this point of unhidden defection, men never arrive at once; they descend not suddenly from a profession of faith to the renunciation of Christianity, from the full lustre of truth to the profound darkness of error. By gradual steps they reach this depth of impiety. At first they exhibit only want of watchfulness—then proceed to omission of duty—then stifle the convictions of conscience; and at length openly depart from God, abandon the religion which they had professed, deny the truths which they had believed, and indulge in crimes at which they once shuddered. In life they frequently suffer insupportable anguish, and in death often depart in horror and despair.

All this is painfully illustrated in the following authentic narrative:

Captain ——, of the United States Navy, had attained a high rank in his profession; a rank which his

gallantry and courage richly deserved. Many things conspired to make him an interesting man. A mind naturally strong, he had well cultivated; to the sciences generally he was no stranger; for the charms of literature he had a high relish which he loved to indulge; and to his various reading he united an extensive knowledge of the world. There was an urbanity in his manners which rendered them truly fascinating; a gentleness that seemed to be interwoven in their very texture. With such qualities it is not surprising that he was a great favourite among his companions, and often the very life of the circle in which he moved. But with all his courage as a military man, and all his accomplishments as a gentleman, he had no proper sense of religion; like too many of his profession, he knew God only to neglect him, and Christianity only to oppose it. In these circumstances deep affliction suddenly visited him, keenly affected a heart naturally tender, and compelled him to reflect upon a subject of which he had been entirely regardless. It was the means of arresting him in his course of gaiety, showing him the vanity of the world, opening his mind to enquiry, and exciting attention to the interests of religion. He gradually forsook his sinful habits, became *in appearance* a changed man, made an open profession of religion, and partook of the holy sacrament.

As might be supposed, such a change in such a character produced no little sensation. Among his brethren of the same profession it was a topic of frequent conversation; and from them, though I was many hundred miles from the scene, I heard of it with joyful interest. His companions were astonished and somewhat vexed

when they found that their gay companion had become religious; that he had that fault in his character which was not to be endured; that his intelligence, affectionate manners, and gentlemanly qualities were now to be rendered almost worthless by their connexion with that unsoldierlike, unmannerly, ungenteel thing, religion. He knew their thoughts, and often heard their sentiments, but bore the opposition with patience and forbearance. He freely conversed with them on the subject, and endeavoured to convince them that the course which he was pursuing was not unreasonable or unbecoming. I am told that he would often say to them: "I once, you know, thought and felt as you do; believed that there was no reality in religion, and therefore neglected it; that the Bible was the offspring of human deceit, and therefore rejected it; but it was because I had not read and examined it. Millions have read it with care and acknowledge its truth; among them have been men the most conscientious; men who were bright luminaries of science; men who were admirably qualified to examine its nature and excellence; men who had no worldly interest to serve by professing to believe it. When a Bacon, a Pascal, a Boyle, a Newton, a Locke and a Leibnitz have studied and received it as true, can you call yourselves impartial enquirers after truth, if you refuse to examine? I have examined it for myself, and believe it to be truth, most important truth. I believe it, not because those illustrious men of whom I have spoken are numbered among its defenders; not merely because the system itself is admirably calculated to exalt human nature, but because I have every where met with evidences of its divinity, which have fully con-

vinced my understanding. Act in like manner, and you will find as many arguments rising out of the New Testament in favour of its inspiration, as rise out of the works of creation in favour of the being of a God."

In a manner the most eloquent and interesting, he would proceed to unfold the internal and external evidence of Christianity, so as to silence, if not to convince his companions. He would frequently answer an objection which was made to his principles, and observe: "You say that religion is altogether unsuitable to our profession; that it generates a timid and passive spirit, and that it is not calculated for forming great and illustrious characters. But you err, not knowing the nature of Christianity. While it discourages and condemns all kind of brutal violence, it certainly inculcates and actually produces dispositions and conduct the most energetic; it is calculated to form men of peculiar courage, and to render them superior to every other fear but that of offending God, and doing injury to man. The efficacy of these principles the lives of Christians have, in numberless cases, displayed; and I hesitate not to say that instances of active exertion, persevering labour, patient suffering and undaunted heroism, cannot be produced like those which have been displayed by the true disciples of Christ. Instead, therefore, of being unsuitable, it seems to me that the religion of the Bible is peculiarly adapted to our profession, because it tends to make men magnanimous and heroic, while at the same time it forbids all violence and injury."—While thus arguing, he would refer to instances where the two professions were happily united; he would point to Col. Gardiner and others like him, who, amidst all the toils,

labours, and victories of a military life, were yet "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and fought none the worse because they went to battle in the Christian armour.

A practice to which he was once addicted, and which he had entirely abandoned, he often referred to in the presence of those who sometimes indulged in it—that of profane swearing. "I may say to you, gentlemen, without giving offence—

> 'Maintain your rank, vulgarity despise:
> To swear is neither brave, polite, nor wise.'

Though some gentlemen swear, it is certainly no mark of gentility, for it is common to the vilest characters in the very lowest ranks of society; it produces an equality the most disgraceful, and places the honorable, the intelligent, the refined and the polished on a level with the most illiterate, depraved and vulgar. It is a sin to which there is little temptation, which displays no courage, offers no enjoyment, gratifies no sense, procures no riches, and has never been made the road to preferment. It is irrational, for many of those who indulge in it use language without thinking of its meaning. It is dreadfully impious, for it is every where forbidden in that Word which I have found to be God's voice; it is thoughtlessly summoning the Almighty to witness our conduct, and to interpose his truth, justice and power in concerns the most trifling and wicked; it is imprecating Divine wrath upon ourselves or others, merely to show that we are positive, or that we are merry, or that we are angry. Would that the practice were for ever banished from our society; would that all military men were to adopt as their motto, '*Swear not at all.*'"

In this manner he would reason and remonstrate with his companions; and if he won none of them over to religion, he succeeded by his arguments to silence their opposition.

Nearly two years after he made a profession of religion, and just as he had received orders to engage in actual service, I met with Captain ——. About to assume the command of a man-of-war, he had come to the naval station from which it was to sail, there to make preparation for a long cruise. Anxious to become personally acquainted with one of whom I had heard so much, and judging, from his profession of faith, that he would desire and highly esteem the society of the pious, I made him a visit, in company with one or two religious friends. His conversation was interesting and instructive. Among other topics, religion was introduced. On the subject of the necessity of Divine revelation, the evidences of Christianity, the baneful tendency of infidelity, the excellency of the Christian system, compared with Paganism and Mahometanism, he descanted fully, and showed that with such themes he was intimately familiar; that to defend the outworks of Christianity few were better qualified. But when those doctrines were introduced which constitute *experimental and practical piety;* which form the spirituality of the gospel, which, while honourable to God, are deeply humiliating to man; when the corruption of the human heart, salvation by grace, justification by faith in Christ, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, transition from spiritual death to spiritual life, conformity to the Divine character, and acquiescence to God's sovereignty were referred to, he evidently felt not the same interest, and expressed not

the same faith; indeed, from something that he slightly uttered, he seemed to think that some, at least, of these doctrines were strange, inconsistent, and bordering upon extravagance. I left him, pleased with much which I saw and heard; but yet apprehensive that on some subjects of vital importance his mind was darkened; painfully apprehensive that his heart was not supremely fixed on God, and might never have been renewed by the Divine Spirit. These fears and suspicions were confirmed by what afterwards took place during the short time he was with us. Far from seeking the society of the pious, he evidently shunned it; thus attesting that the mere professor of religion is inclined to avoid, rather than desire, "the communion of saints." Another circumstance gave too much reason to fear that he was moving in a direction which leads to a wide departure from God. All real Christians love the Sabbath, prize it as the chief auxiliary of true religion, and highly value it as the principal means of spiritual improvement; they regard it as the market-day of the soul, when it lays in the provision which is to nourish and strengthen it during the week; as the season when the soldier of Christ, engaged in warfare with the world, lies by to repair the losses he may have sustained, and to prepare again for action by renewing those Christian graces which gave him the victory. Such, however, were not the views and feelings of the subject of this narrative; for on the afternoon of the Sabbath, instead of being in the house of God, engaged in the exercises of devotion, and preparing for the heavenly rest, he was in a different place, employed in a different occupation—at a large dining-party, amid the gay and worldly, where no solemnity of prayer

or animating notes of praise were heard; where the introduction of religion would be regarded as intrusive austerity, calculated only to damp the gaiety of the spirits, and impair the relish of society. There many hours of the Lord's day were squandered by him in vanity and merriment, the retrospect of which could afford no gratification or pleasure to a pious mind.

Soon afterwards he went to sea, and was lost from my sight and observation for more than two years. At the end of that period, he returned to the naval station from which he had sailed, giving his acquaintance an opportunity of again observing his character and conduct. But that character which was doubtful when he left them, was now fixed and settled; it was obvious to all that he had fallen away entirely from his Christian profession, and had relapsed into more than all the irreligion of his former life. In his principles, maxims, conversation and conduct, he was completely the man of the world; all pretension to religion he willingly abandoned; his bosom companions were the thoughtlessly irreligious, his pleasures entirely those of worldly indulgence. It was truly melancholy to see with what pains he made it appear that he was no longer a professed Christian; truly awful to hear him profaning the name of that God whom he once professed to adore; indulging in a practice for which he formerly reproved his companions, and attempting to justify it by the temptations that assailed him. "Excuse me," he would say to those who he knew disliked the practice, "I know that I am doing wrong, but for some months past I have been so habituated to the language that I scarcely know when I use it; and such is the character of those that I have commanded at sea,

that I could not enforce obedience without it." For gratifications like these, he "made shipwreck of his profession;" for these he bartered away his God, his Saviour, and his soul.

While thus pursuing a course of gaiety, striving to banish from his mind every thought of a future state, and almost succeeding in stifling the convictions of conscience, he was suddenly arrested by the prostration of his health. Other means of recovery failing, he visited, by the advice of his physician, the Springs of ——, with the hope of finding the waters effectual to his restoration; but on his arrival, his disease, instead of being mitigated, daily increased, threatening to remove him soon from the world. He was surrounded by his friends of the naval profession, who truly sympathized with him, and tenderly ministered to the wants of his body; but his soul needed relief, and they were unable to give solace to the troubled and wounded spirit. No blessed angel of peace hovered around his pillow to chase away disquieting thoughts; no staff of the Saviour was supplied him on which he might securely lean to uphold him through "the valley of the shadow of death." When his associates saw him gradually sinking, and at last beyond all hope of recovery, and communicated to him the painful fact, the intelligence was received with alarm. But he intimated that it was not so much *death* that he feared, as the *consequence* resulting from it; that it was not giving up his breath, or becoming insensible, at which he shrunk; it was the terrible *hereafter*, the something beyond the grave at which he recoiled. He seemed to see sin arming the last enemy with terrors—and these terrors he could not defy—at the cause of

these terrors he could not trifle. His conscience, which had long slumbered, now awoke, and keenly afflicted him with fearful apprehensions of the future. It would appear that Divine truth, which had so long been injured, wounded, and suppressed, was now bright and tormenting. It would appear that by that terrible light which God sometimes sheds down into the soul, the dying man was overwhelmed by the realities of eternity; that the remembrance of his profession of religion, and his awful apostacy, planted within him the daggers of remorse. He said but little; but what he did say too truly proved that his soul was wrung with agony; that in this trying moment he found no comfort from earth, and no ray of consolation from heaven. On one occasion, when his countenance evinced extreme mental agitation, he suddenly, and with great emphasis, exclaimed, "FORSAKEN, FORSAKEN!" His attendants kindly said, "No! Captain ——, you are not forsaken; your friends are here ministering to every want, and be assured, they will not leave you. He said, "*You* are kind;" and looking upward, repeated the word *forsaken*, leaving no doubt of his meaning. Afterwards, when he was thought to be almost speechless, he vehemently cried out, "DESERTED, DESERTED, DESERTED!" and they were the last words which he was heard to utter. There is too much reason to fear that in the situation in which he then was, though surrounded by the tenderest earthly friends, he was "deserted" by Heaven; that while beyond the reach of human aid, he was criminally in despair of Divine help. He had wilfully forsaken God; and God, in justice, now appeared to forsake him; he had "drawn back" from the profession of Christianity;

and now the Divine threatening seemed to be fulfilled, "My soul shall have no pleasure in him."

A few reflections, instead of weakening the effect of the foregoing narrative, may tend to increase the impression.

1. We perceive the *danger of self-deception, and learn how far we may go without being truly converted to God.*

Like the unhappy man whose life and death we have contemplated, we may have a speculative knowledge of sacred truth, be bold champions for the Divine authority of the Scriptures, and present the strongest arguments to oppose the sceptic and convince the gainsayer. Like him, we may make a public profession of religion, unite with the visible church, forsake some outward sins, and practice some amiable virtues, make the most solemn vows, and perform many works of righteousness; and yet we may want every thing that constitutes a *real* Christian; we may want the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, renewing and sanctifying the heart; humility and contrition of soul; a life of faith upon the Son of God; a hatred to all known sin, and an unfeigned love for continued holiness. Many, in every age, have been deceived on the subject of religion; many stars in the church, which for a while glittered and shone, at last set in darkness; many who have been esteemed by men to be pious, have been accursed by the Omniscient; many who, in their prayers, thanked God for their hopes of glory, are now bewailing their misery in the regions of woe. What a motive should this be, diligently to examine the foundation of our hope, and the ground of our

confidence! Let us not be satisfied with those appearances of piety which shall not stand the test of the judgment-day: let us impartially try our souls, sensible how apt we are to flatter and deceive ourselves; let us lift up our voice to Him who must finally and decisively examine us; let us implore His light and direction, and cry with David, "Search us, O! Lord, and know our ways; try us, and know our hearts, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting."

2. The *means* by which the subject of this narrative arrived at a state of apostacy, are worthy of being observed and remembered. He first, as far as we can learn, rejected the spiritual and evangelical doctrines of Scripture —then conformed too much to the world—then abandoned the society of the pious—then violated and profaned the Sabbath—then unnecessarily mingled with the ungodly, and made them his intimate associates—and at last was prepared for almost every species of transgression. Thus one iniquity committed by him prepared the way for another, and before he was aware of it, he was entangled in the snare which the enemy had spread for him; and like the insect in the spider's web, lost all power of resistance, and fell a prey to the destroyer; an awful warning to the professor of religion who retains and practices even *one* sin. The indulgence of that one sin will operate upon your whole moral constitution, spread through your soul as a deadly poison, and, in time, completely harden your heart. What is it but the admission of a principle which is fraught with the most dangerous consequences, that God's authority may be disregarded, when conflicting with inclination? What is it

but the destruction of all resistance, and the formation of an evil habit which, like the mighty torrent, will, sooner or later, bear down before it all opposition. Professed Christian, escape from the servitude of that one sin which seems to be gaining dominion over you; it is a master that will not suffer you to stand still, that is hurrying you forward with accelerated force—and the road to which it is urging you is *apostacy*. Return quickly to God, renouncing *all* iniquity, or you perish.

3. *What unhappiness and misery does apostacy produce!* What misery was experienced by the distressed individual whom we are now contemplating, after he had renounced his Christian profession! It would appear that he could not entirely stifle the conviction of conscience; that when engaged, as he often was, in mirth and festivity, the voice of this inward monitor would be heard, recalling the past; that his profession of religion and dreadful apostacy would rise up in sad remembrance before him, changing his visions of joy into scenes of anguish. He knew (for he had not entirely disbelieved the Bible) that there was a remedy for this remorse in the blood of the cross; but upon that blood he had openly trampled; that blood he had "esteemed an unholy thing;" and therefore he lived and died a stranger to happiness. Who would exchange the peace which the gospel gives for remorse like this?

4. *How different is the good man's death from that of him who has departed from God!* No forebodings of wrath and fiery indignation distract *his* soul; his spirit is elevated and cheered by the lively hope of eternal life. You see not on his face the gloom of despair; you hear not from his lips the shriek of dismay, "*forsaken, de-*

serted;" on the contrary, you behold patience under suffering, calm and serene reliance upon the Redeemer, and, at times, even joy and triumph in his last hours. In the death of the apostate, you behold the sun setting in blackness, darkness, and tempest; in that of the Christian who is "faithful unto death," it descends in a serene sky, casting beams of comfort all around. The former is "driven away in his wickedness;" the latter "hath hope in his death."

CHAPTER VII.

AN OLD DISCIPLE.

"A bruised reed he will not break;
Afflictions all his children feel;
He wounds them for his mercy's sake,
He wounds to heal."

THOUGH the church of Jesus is one bound together by the fellowship of sentiment and feeling, yet there is a diversity in its members easily perceptible upon close inspection. Though a strong and secret influence impels their hearts into the same direction, fills them with common sympathies, and binds them closely to one another; yet their features in many respects vary; they differ in their knowledge and perception, their hopes and pleasures, their groans and struggles. It is pleasing to examine this diversity, to investigate its causes; to learn how far it affects the safety of their condition; and to derive from the enquiry strength in weakness, relief in trouble, and counsel in perplexity.

After I took the pastoral charge of ——, one of the first persons who called upon me was a man of elderly and venerable appearance, whose hoary head and feeble step indicated an age verging towards threescore years and ten. He affably introduced himself, saying, "I have thought it unnecessary to bring any of your acquaintance formally to introduce me; I am Mr. N——." His manner was so frank and affectionate

that my heart was instantly attracted towards him, and prepared at once to love him. His countenance was intelligent, with a sweet expression of benevolence mingled with what appeared to me some pensive sorrow. After I had returned his salutation, and told him that I was happy of his acquaintance, he added, "We are of a different profession—you of the ministerial and I of the legal profession; we are, too, of different religious denominations—you in worshipping God, pray extempore, and I with a set form; but I hope that as Christians we shall love one another as much as if we were called by the same name; we welcome you to ——, and I trust you will be the means of great good; you will find here a wide field of usefulness."—After saying a little more, and apologizing for his short visit in consequence of an engagement, he took leave of me. It was not long before I returned his visit. I went at a time when I knew he was at leisure, was received with cordiality, and hailed as a brother. I soon discovered that he was a man of information, clear judgment, and much good sense; and, in addition to this, an enlightened, devout and consistent Christian. Our conversation was principally on that topic which was nearest his heart, and "out of the abundance of which his mouth spake"—the subject of religion. On this theme there was but little difference of opinion; the same doctrines of the gospel were embraced by us, the same plan of salvation, the same views of Divine truth, the same sense of duty and obligation to our common Lord, and, in most particulars, the very same experience of spiritual piety. With great humility he recounted the manner in which he had been brought to the truth, and in substance re-

lated what follows: "Though an old man, I have not long been a disciple of the Saviour, enjoying the hopes that now animate me. For many years I was wholly blind to my condition as a sinner, and to God's character as my sovereign. I supposed that if I were only correct and decorous in my external conduct, kind and courteous to others, faithful in the discharge of my social duties, that there was no ground to fear any future condemnation. When I afterwards added to these outward acts the observance of the forms of religion, I felt my conduct good and my condition safe; though in my desires and pursuits there was not the least reference to the glory or will of God. And if at any time conscience alarmed me, its fears were quieted by an increased diligence in the use of these forms. For years I remained in this wretched delusion, never enquiring what were my views of the gospel, or my sentiments towards the Redeemer, or the influence of my religion on my heart and temper. At length I was awakened by the Spirit to a sense of my danger, and truly convicted of my sins. I well recollect how amazed I then was, when I had a glimpse of the Divine purity, at my utter ignorance of myself and of God. Never was a poor sinner so exposed to a view of his iniquities; I stood before the Judge of the world with the guilt of them all, and with the dreadful aggravations under which they were committed. How I prayed—how I read the Scriptures—how I used every means that could be thought of to procure peace! But I had no rest nor hope. 'Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting,' seemed to be written upon every thing which I did."

"But why did you not go to your minister and ask him to direct you in the way of salvation?"

"Ah! my dear sir; there was at that time very little religion among us. If I had gone to him with a sorrowful countenance, with the enquiry, 'What shall I do to be saved?' he, perhaps, could not have answered it; perhaps would even have been offended. It was not until the Rev. Mr. L—— came among us that the pure gospel was preached here; but since then we have had a succession of truly evangelical men, whose labours have been blessed to the conversion of many."

"But how long did you remain in that state of fear and guilt?"

"For months and months; and though I was not sensible of it at the time, yet the course which I took drove me farther and farther from the gospel. I performed the external duties of life strictly, and attended the Divine ordinances regularly, with the expectation of creating to myself a claim on the favour of God, and a plea for pardon; but it only strengthened my opposition to the cross of Christ, and hourly made me inaccessible to the glad tidings of salvation. The more I advanced in that course, the more deeply was I involved in condemnation and darkness, and it is a wonder of mercy that I ever returned from it. It was indeed 'the horrible pit and the miry clay.' Thanks be to the Holy Spirit who rent the veil of ignorance from my mind, and showed me the artifices which I was using to rob God of his glory and my soul of its salvation; under his enlightening influences my moral virtues, exercises of devotion and acts of charity appeared defective and polluted; infinitely

disproportioned to the demands of the law, and wholly insufficient for recommendation to my Maker."

"He was thus preparing you for the cordial reception of the gospel. But how did you at length receive hope—what means were employed to give comfort?"

"After being some time in this state, sensible that I was only increasing my guilt, and sure that by all I was doing I was 'getting no better,' but like the woman in the gospel, 'only worse and worse,' I met with a copy of Davies' Sermons. At first I thought it was the Davies who preached here some years ago, who had no repute either for talents or piety, and laid the book aside; but I was soon undeceived, and learned that it was the man of whom I had heard my father often speak, who preached with such power in Hanover, and who effected such a reformation throughout that region. I knew his son very well; he was collector of our port for several years. Poor fellow! he was very different from his father—he never read those sermons—never observed the Sabbath—never attended church—nor even believed that there was a reality in religion. When I possessed this book the first part which I read, and to which I seemed to be directed by the *special* providence of God, was the delightful sermon from the text, '*He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.*' For the first time hope beamed upon my soul. I felt that I was the poor, feeble, shaking reed, and this not in its best condition, but crushed and broken. Such a representation is given in that sermon of the grace and tenderness of the Redeemer that I could no longer resist giving myself to him. When I considered the endearing characters which he bears, the precious promises which

he utters, the instances of pardoning grace which he exhibits, the nature of that death which he bore, and the characters of those for whom he shed his blood, I hesitated not to resign myself to his arms, certain that a refusal would be impeaching his veracity: in the exercise of faith I cast entirely upon him my complaints and groanings, my sense of sin and feeling of helplessness, resolved, if I must perish, to perish at his feet. But I did not perish; he spake peace to my soul, gave me 'the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,' and announced to my conscience acquittal from guilt."

The old man, while speaking of an event so joyful, of a change so great, from long dejection to cheerful hope, was deeply affected. After a pause, he said, "This same passage, 'he will not break the bruised reed,' now gives me more hope than perhaps any other passage in Scripture. I am weak and feeble in mind, body and grace, and *for that reason* the care and pity of Christ will be *particularly* extended to me. The weakest infant peculiarly receives the attention of the mother; the tenderest plants are peculiarly watched by the gardener; the feeblest lambs are carefully borne in the bosom of the shepherd; and faint, weak and trembling believers are peculiarly under the guardianship of a gracious Saviour—it is his glory and delight tenderly to cherish the weak and feeble. It is my desire to be ever under his government, to submit to his sceptre, as well as to glory in his cross; my chief prayer to be perfectly conformed to his image; my sincere regret that the remembrance of his compassion so little melts my soul."

After uniting in prayer, thanking God for the displays of his redeeming grace, and blessing him for the gift of a

Saviour who "breaketh not the bruised reed," we separated; and I returned to my study, I hope, with my love inflamed, and my gratitude enlivened; animated with new zeal in *his* cause who is full of benignity and grace, and rejoicing that to such a sympathizing Friend I could have recourse under the pressure of all woes, and the burden of all sins. I returned, determined to be more tender; to be in this respect more like my Saviour; like him to regard with sympathy and love the heavy-laden and feeble, "the bruised reed and the smoking flax;" like him to bear with their weaknesses, compassionate their sorrows, bind up their broken spirits, and lead them to the fountain of consolation and peace.

This aged saint I continued occasionally to visit, and with all the freedom with which I visited any of my own parishioners; and the more intimate my acquaintance became, the stronger was the conviction that he had virtues and graces which evinced more than ordinary Christian principle. His peculiar probity, his scrupulous and unbending love of justice, his remarkable purity of spirit, refined and exalted by religion, gave him the name of the "*honest lawyer*."—"An excellent spirit was in him," and against him, as against Daniel, the gainsayer "could find none occasion nor fault, save that he was faithful." But that which peculiarly struck me was his spirituality of mind in all the concerns of life. With him religion was not a matter of fancy or speculation, but the steady, quiet, unostentatious devotion of the heart and conduct to God; resting in a deep consciousness of the fallen condition of man, and animated by a lively faith in the Redeemer. Few more habitually cul-

tivated communion with God. His favourite books which he loved to read, were the works of John Newton and Thomas Scott. His Bible was his daily study; and the time allowed to his stated devotional exercises, I am told, he would never, under the impulse of pressing business, materially abridge. He would often urge upon his friends the peculiar importance of these exercises, and observe that such a practice, instead of hindering the due performance of other duties, proves the best incitement to exertion, and the truest source of success.

On one occasion, when I was with him, he spoke of the nature of prayer, and the great difficulty of performing it. Taking up a volume of Newton, he said: "Hear what this devout man says; 'I can read, or write, or converse with a ready will; but prayer is more spiritual and inward than any of these; and the more spiritual any duty is, the more my carnal heart starts from it.' If such a man could use this language, how much greater difficulty must I have in performing the duty! Yet our true happiness consists in it; it brings us into the immediate presence of Him whom we love; it is the direct act of communion with him; the foretaste of all that we hope for hereafter; the vision and enjoyment of God. Here there is an unspeakable peace of mind which is found nowhere else; a calm resting upon God for the supply of every need; a casting of all our burden upon a friend who is able to sustain it; a freedom from all perplexing anxieties and fears; an exalted and endeared friendship with 'Him whom our soul loveth.' Here, in the performance of this duty, every grace is exercised, every sin opposed, every blessing obtained, the whole soul strengthened. With a knowledge

of all these advantages, what peculiar difficulty have I in performing the duty—what reluctance at times even to attempt it? Besides this opposition of a corrupt nature within, Satan no doubt uses all his subtility to keep me from the service, knowing how much it is calculated to impair his kingdom. When I have overcome the difficulties of one day, I am assailed the next with new conflicts, so that the strongest and most determined resolution is necessary to ensure regularity even in the attempt."—Pointing to some Forms of Prayer that lay on the table, he added: "I get all the assistance from others that I can. These *you* call *crutches*—you young persons, can do without them; but such a feeble old man as I am has need of crutches—sometimes I get along without them for days and weeks; but I always like to have them near me in case of necessity. Jenks' Devotions I prefer above all others; for I often love to confine my requests to a single object; sometimes to hope, sometimes to faith, humility, knowledge, love; and here there are excellent prayers for each of these graces. But in using them I find other thoughts continually occurring which I freely present; to such a use of them who can object?"—I have often thought of these remarks of the venerable saint, and wonder that prejudice should lead so many Christians to deprive themselves of benefit and consolation.—"But," he continued, "David is of more advantage to me in this respect than any other writer; there are few of his prayers which I cannot use and adopt as my own; it is a rich 'fountain,' from which I have 'drawn abundantly of the waters of salvation.' The Psalmist's religious experience is often like mine—that circumstance inspires hope and affords

aid. He tells me more than any other writer in Scripture what passed between God and his soul, and therefore lets me know what I may hope from God, and what he expects from me. What could I do without the Psalms of David? His very expressions I love to use when I am employed in confession, petition or thanksgiving—the very best words with which I can clothe my thoughts—'sound speech that cannot be condemned'—'words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.'"

Another striking peculiarity which distinguished our aged friend, and which was visible to all his acquaintance, was freedom from bigotry and religious prejudice. He had no such overweening attachment to his own opinions as alienated his affection from Christians of another name; no such prejudice as prevented him from acknowledging the exhibition of moral excellence out of his own communion. On the contrary, there was in him a quick perception of "the beauties of holiness," wherever they appeared, and a ready acknowledgment by acts strongly affectionate. Occasionally he was with us in our social meetings for prayer, and not unfrequently at our communion table; and instead of standing at a distance from those who were called by another name, he loved to associate with them, to sympathize with them, to cultivate with them a spirit of unity and tenderness. Of this fraternal affection, without verging in any degree to the baneful extreme of an unscriptural latitudinarianism, without showing any indifference to truth, or toleration of error, he was as beautiful an example as I have ever met with. Often did he deplore the alienation of heart, and the difference in conduct which are to be found among the followers of Christ, speak of the evils of this

disunion, and lament that it hardened the consciences of the irreligious, weakened the hands of the pious, and impeded the progress of truth. Frequently did he remark that amidst minor differences of opinion, all real Christians held the same fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, and that their personal experience is every where essentially the same; that they are all penitent for their transgressions, all mourning over their innate depravity, all looking to the same Saviour for pardon, all praying for the influences of the same Spirit, all striving against the same "body of sin," all pressing forward towards the same "mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus;" and that they should therefore feel a peculiar delight in each other as objects of the Father's mercy, the Saviour's grace, and the Spirit's influences; that they should associate, converse, pray and commune with each other, on the ground of their common relationship. More than once have I heard him say: "I have a hand of fellowship ever ready, and a heart of love ever open to all the true followers of the Redeemer; and I am sure that just in proportion as I have increased in love to them, I have grown in love to my Saviour."

But with all his excellencies of Christian character, this aged saint suffered more than most Christians, even those that are advanced in life, from religious depression. In the account which he gave me of his conversion, I saw nothing of it; there were then such strong expressions of hope, and even joy, that I had no conception that he was thus afflicted; but further acquaintance taught me that although, like Enoch, he was striving to "walk with God," yet a gloom truly distressing hung around his path. In these circumstances, he would

sometimes send for me. On one occasion I found him reading the seventy-seventh psalm. "This," he observed, "this is the picture of myself, the very conflict which I am maintaining with my fears and griefs, the spiritual trouble which deeply afflicts me—nothing can be so painful as the suspension of God's favour, the apprehension of his wrath, the withholding of his promise—this wounds the spirit—who can bear it? In the midst of the psalm, David, or whoever was the author, cries, '*This is my infirmity*'—this fear that 'God will cast off and be favourable no more;' that 'his mercy is clean gone for ever,' and that 'his promise will fail for evermore;' that 'he hath forgotten to be gracious, and shut up his tender mercies'—this was his 'infirmity.' It is so with me—this despondency of spirit and distrust of God is my 'infirmity,' my calamity, affliction, cross—'the sin that doth easily beset me.' O! that I could be freed from it!"

"But do not forget what the Psalmist immediately adds: 'I will remember the works of the Lord, surely I will remember thy wonders of old'—consider how he silences his fears by the remembrance of the things which God had formerly done for him, and here imitate him—recall the time when with humbled heart you sought Divine mercy and was not cast off—bring to your mind the wonders wrought for yourself and others; and you will find the recollection a powerful antidote against the distrust of his promise; you will find him an unchangeable God who will certainly finish the work which he has begun. Read the psalm again. The author begins it with the language of the deepest penitential distress, almost bordering on despair, and ends it with such strong

confidence in God's power as causes his fears suddenly to vanish."

"I ought to look on the bright side; but I find myself continually inclined to view that only which is dark —*this is my infirmity.*"

This was his character; he was often dejected and filled with distress, though his piety was unequivocal. I had difficulty in accounting for it. It seemed not, in his case, to be owing to any bodily temperament; a cause which I had often seen in others, who "had more need of the physician than of the divine." It seemed not to arise from any religious error, any deficiency in his acquaintance with the doctrines of the Gospel. Some I have known who evidently marred their enjoyment by a misconception of these doctrines; who passed their lives in sorrow because of their obscure views of the Divine government, the plan of redemption, and the new covenant; because of their low conceptions of the character of God, as if caprice rather than faithfulness was one of his attributes; as if, instead of delighting to be gracious, he was only watching, as it were, for an opportunity of inflicting punishment; as if his word, to the humble and contrite, breathed awful threatenings rather than the language of invitation and encouragement. But the subject of this narrative had just and clear views of Divine truth; of the scheme of redemption; the terms and intent of the covenant of grace; the variety, extent, and immutability of the Divine promises; the infinite mercy of God; the boundless compassion of the Saviour; the full and free salvation which he purchased; the prevalency of his unceasing intercession; and the nature of Christian faith, hope, and joy. Nor had I any reason

to believe that latent sins, indulged and cherished, were the cause of this darkness. As far as man could judge, there was a diligent performance of all religious duties: private prayer, the study of the Scriptures, strict self-examination and devout meditation, were no doubt regularly performed—there seemed to be no worldly spirit cherished, no open remissness in known duty, no refusal to give up the heart entirely to God, no want of attention to the cultivation of the religious affections, no heedlessness on the brink of temptation, no secret drawing back in religion. Where there is such declension, even if there be no inconsistency in life, there will be in a tender conscience not only apprehension and doubt, but distressing darkness and depression; and he is not to be envied who can plunge into conscious guilt, and yet be tranquil and cheerful.

On this whole subject I conversed with him frequently and freely. On one occasion he said: "I well know what David meant, when he exclaimed, 'Thou hidest thy face from me, and I am troubled'—he esteemed it the severest trial; and I regard every other affliction as light, compared with this anguish of spirit."

"But should you not be submissive, perhaps encouraged by remembering that 'the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world'—that it is the common path to heaven which all the saints have trod—that you can discern on this road the footsteps of the 'great cloud of witnesses' who have gone before you—and that if you were to know the religious experience of believers now, you would find them all 'groaning, being burdened'—you find David, Jeremiah, Job, Isaiah, and other scriptural saints, having the same

thoughts, and uttering the same complaints. You do not sigh and tremble alone. Where are 'the hands' which never 'hang down,' and 'the knees' which never 'tremble?'"

"But why is it thus?"

"It is evidently a part of that discipline which our wise and Heavenly Father exercises towards his children; a painful and humiliating, but yet useful probation through which he calls them to pass. So weak is our nature, so prone are we to vanity and self-dependence, so imperfect the progress in holiness which we make, that we need a constant check upon our natural tendencies to pride. We know what effect worldly prosperity produces; how it interrupts communion with God, leads the heart aside, and impairs the exercise of every grace. I have sometimes thought that we cannot enjoy for any length of time an uninterrupted state of *spiritual* prosperity without being in danger of becoming puffed up with presumption and self-sufficiency. Paul found that his admission into 'the third heavens,' which we might naturally suppose would have bowed him to the dust in self-abasement, served to foment spiritual pride, so that he required the severe discipline of 'a thorn in the flesh' to prevent his 'being exalted above measure.' Some 'messenger of Satan' we need, to prevent that unsafe elation of mind which may be occasioned by a long and continued attention to our high and rich privileges; to bring us down to a lower region; to check the growth of all self-confidence; to teach us our entire dependence on God; and to lead us to him, and to him alone, for every supply of grace and comfort. Besides, if God were to exempt us entirely from doubt and perturbation, inward

sorrow and darkness—if he were to afford us a continued sunshine of religious prosperity, we should be too well satisfied with this state of existence; we should feel that this was our rest, and that there is no need of a new residence, another sphere of action, and a higher source of enjoyment. It is a reason why we should be patiently submissive to this as well as to every other dispensation of Providence, believing that 'the Lord doeth all things well,' and has wise and merciful ends in permitting such spiritual afflictions to befal his children."

"You do not mean that this disquieting fear and distressing darkness are to be retained and cherished as an advantage?"

"Not at all. Though they may be overruled for our ultimate good, they are not in themselves an advantage. The frame of mind after which we should aspire is a firm, steady, though humble hope of the pardon of our sins, and our acceptance with God through the merits of the Redeemer; a settled peace of soul, unshaken by the storms of the world; an assurance of the Divine love which can withstand all earthly sorrow and persecution, and which can be destroyed only by a sense of conscious guilt."

"But are these dark fears and distressing doubts consistent with faith?"

"Not in general, I think, with strong faith. Nothing tends more to take away our doubts, to brighten our evidences, to comfort our hearts, than a vigorous faith in Christ, as a free and complete Saviour. This grace is often exhibited in Scripture in opposition to distressing fears. 'I will trust and not be afraid.' We read of the 'joy of faith,' the 'assurance of faith,' of being

'filled with all joy and peace in believing,' of 'rejoicing by faith in Christ.' These and other passages of a similar nature teach us that faith and fears are in apposition to each other; that as the former declines, the latter prevail; that in proportion as the former sinks in strength and activity, to the same degree do temptations assault and overpower us. As soon as we begin to distrust the power of Christ, the faithfulness of his promises, or the absolute freeness of his grace, we are sinking. Thus Peter, when walking upon the water at Christ's command, and in his strength, was upheld as long as his faith in the Redeemer's power and kindness was maintained; but no sooner did he attend to the boisterous wind, and withdraw his dependence, than he began to sink. And then the tender and instructive rebuke was given by his master: 'O! thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?' There is no way, then, it seems to me, so effectual, of having our evidences clear, our comforts strong, and our darkness removed, as the immediate exercise of trust in a free and glorious Saviour; the more we see of the fulness of Divine grace in him, the more experience we shall have of true support and consolation. Let me then exhort you, as I exhort myself in such circumstances, if you cannot look inward with any degree of complacency, to look upward, exclaiming, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'—if you 'walk in darkness, and see no light,' trust 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' and 'stay yourself upon his righteousness;' if you are sinking under the burden of sin, incomparably sorer than any other distress, look by faith to him who 'bore' your 'sins in his own body on the tree;' if the beams of God's countenance be suspended,

and there be no sensible comfort, 'rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh'—no reliance upon any thing of your own. Then this 'thorn in the flesh' you may have grace to resist; a new song may be put into your mouth; 'the snare is broken, and I am delivered.' When you enquire again, as did David, 'Why art thou cast down, O! my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?' you can add, as he did, 'I shall *yet* praise him'—in this world, or in the world to come."

"These feelings, I fear, will continue as long as I live. In addition to the causes that you have thought of, there is another reason that is peculiar to me. It was not until late in life that I was brought to a knowledge of the Saviour. My youth was spent, not in what the world terms immorality and vice, but yet in the forgetfulness of God and the neglect of his service. As an old man, I look back; I am compelled to review the past, and the retrospect affords me no satisfaction; I see no early exercise of faith, and hope, and love; no early enjoyment of communion with God and fellowship with the saints; no early peace of conscience and anticipation of glory; but on the contrary, I see myself 'a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God.' I fear that in my youthful days I did an irreparable injury to others, and that I drew many into sin by my solicitations and example. The retrospect makes a deep impression upon my feelings, awakens many a bitter pang of remorse, and compels me to cry out with Job, 'Thou hast made me to possess the iniquities of my youth.' These things have prevented me from going 'on my way rejoicing,' clouded my hopes, darkened my mind; and will, I fear, follow me to my death-bed."

"You ought not, my friend, to dwell upon these things too much, but should say, 'where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound;' and comparing your present hopes, fears, tastes, and enjoyments with those which characterized your youth, you should look at the decisive evidences which are presented of a renewal of character, and say, 'whereas I was once blind, now I see.' These things afford subjects for abundant thanksgiving; muse frequently upon them, and your heart may burn within you, and rejoice in God your Saviour. When, with Paul, you exclaim, 'I am the chief of sinners,' add, as he did, 'I know in whom I have believed.'"

Not long after this conversation, he was called to endure that lingering sickness which terminated in death. For weeks and months he was confined to his room, and in the midst of "much weariness and painfulness," began seriously to "set his house in order," as one who was about to "die." The nearer he approached the eternal world, the more did he feel the value of his soul, and the more deeply was he concerned to know whether it was "right with God." He would sometimes say, "If I am wrong, I am wrong for eternity, and will soon be without the reach of reparation;" and evidently felt that it was an awful thing to appear before the heart-searching Judge. These considerations caused a deep depression of spirits, and showed that he had a severe conflict with the spiritual enemy. But an unfeigned humility and self-abasement, a deep-rooted abhorrence of sin, a patient submission to the will of God, and a simple reliance upon the Saviour of sinners, were too conspicuously exhibited not to arrest the attention of those around him. As he drew near the period of his departure, no

peculiar consolations illumined his death—his dejection and darkness seemed to extend, in a degree, to the final scene; but we doubt not it was a bright sun setting under a dark cloud, and have every reason to think that he died as safely as if he had expired exulting and triumphant; and that his soul as certainly entered the mansions of rest as if the Holy Spirit had vouchsafed to him a bright vision of eternal glory, and enabled him to long and pant for the "crown of righteousness." While he is now enjoying the full manifestation of God's love, we cherish with delight the remembrance of his piety and excellence.

"Now rejoicing in his lot,
Pensive memory loves to weep
O'er the venerable spot,
Where his dear, cold relics sleep.

Grave, the guardian of his dust,
Grave, the treasure of the skies;
Every atom of thy trust,
Rests in hope, again to rise."

1. We are taught that the *free grace of God in conversion is not limited to persons, or times, or circumstances.* In this instance it was extended to one whose profession is generally regarded unfavorable to piety; one who had long attended to the outward forms of religion without love to God, or faith in the Redeemer; one advanced in years, and, as he often confessed, who had long grieved the Holy Spirit; one who received pardon, not by the merit of a well-spent life, but as a free gift, through the righteousness of a Saviour. Thanks be to God, such instances are continually occurring, tes-

tifying that God never "leaves himself without a witness;" that he will always have instruments to carry on his work, and "a people to show forth his praise"—the "light of the world," to keep it from darkness, the "salt of the world," to keep it from corruption.

2. *The reason which the subject of this narrative often gave for his peculiar religious depression and spiritual darkness is worthy of consideration—the want of early piety.* He always regarded it as one of the principal causes of the deep dejection that oppressed his mind; often lamented that the best part of his days was spent without gratitude to God or love to the Redeemer, in losing so many opportunities, misimproving so many talents, and abusing so many privileges; deeply regretted that he did not early engage in the business of religion, as he did in his secular profession, and in youth acquire Christian habits, obtain religious knowledge, and lead a holy life. His experience, I doubt not, is that of all who remember not God in the morning of their days, and who defer his service until the decline of life. It is a tender and powerful motive to the young to devote themselves to the Redeemer. What indeed is so lovely as to see youth, at the call of God, sacrificing its levity and selfishness, its love of pleasure and spirit of indulgence, and surrendering itself at once to the happy and holy service of its Maker? It is not possible to estimate too highly the importance of early piety. Those saints whose names shine so brightly on the sacred records, cultivated religion early in life, and served God from their youth. The Scriptures animate and encourage us by the example of a Joseph, who rose superiour to youthful excesses, and repulsed with holy indignation

temptations to sin against God; an Obadiah, who "feared the Lord from his youth;" a Samuel from his tenderest years serving and loving his Heavenly Friend; a Josiah, "while young, seeking after the God of his fathers;" a Timothy, acquainted with "the Scriptures from his youth," and by them "made wise unto salvation;" a John, the youngest and most beloved of the apostles of the Saviour. These, and others like them, encourage youth to tread in the happy path in which they walked, and to obtain that grace which is able to purify their hearts. None, perhaps, but those who are suffering the penalty of early transgressions, who have wasted the morning of life, and who are now called to "redeem the time" which they have lost or abused, can properly estimate the value of early religion; none but those can judge of the power which the habits of youth exercise on the character, comforts and usefulness of maturer age. With what regret do they think of that precious season that was wasted in sin; with what pain and agony does each exclaim: "What knowledge, what holiness might I have then obtained—what a holy and heavenly life might I have then led—what days and years of mercy did I throw away for nothing!"

3. *In his large and liberal spirit, and in his love for the followers of Christ, the believer whose character we are contemplating is worthy of imitation.* In this we have seen that he was distinguished, and by his example useful. God, for wise ends, has permitted the existence of various denominations among real Christians, to incite them to greater diligence and circumspection; to lead them mutually to watch over each other; to prevent that fatal stagnation which arises from undisturbed re-

pose. This division, while it should lead us to the exercise of self-diffidence and humility; to the diligent study of the Holy Scriptures, and to earnest prayer to God to guide us into all truth; to the promotion of religion itself rather than its mere unessential modifications, should also induce us to practice forbearance and candour to all who differ from us in opinion, and serve our Master under another name. We should do more; we should maintain with them the full force of brotherly affection, without allowing our differences to interrupt for a moment the exercise of the most entire good-will; we should recognize and love them as members of the same body, and brethren in the same family. What churches we should have upon earth, if they were all governed by love, as the ruling principle—what an irresistible proof it would afford of the divinity of the religion of Jesus! In the primitive ages of the church, this virtue shone so brightly in the character of its members, was so conspicuous in all their conduct, was expressed in acts so noble and disinterested, as to become a proverb with the surrounding pagans, and call forth the well-known exclamation: "See how these Christians love one another!" —"By this," says our Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" —a declaration that this is to be a peculiar proof to the world that we are Christians—the touchstone by which we are to be examined and known. This love has prevailed in all periods, as religion has prevailed, and declined as religion has declined. It is a cardinal virtue in the character of Christians, and the law which is to regulate all their conduct to each other. Its strength and degree are distinctly noticed by the Saviour, and his

own conduct exhibited as the pattern—"ye should love one another as I have loved you." His affection for us was real as well as nominal, so should be ours to his disciples—his was pure and disinterested, so should be ours—his was a love of forbearance and forgiveness, so should be ours—his was unchangeable, notwithstanding our weakness; so should be ours to our fellow Christians, notwithstanding their infirmities of temper and conduct. Wearied with the jar of endless controversy in the church on earth, the spiritually minded Christian often looks away to that heavenly state, where he can breathe an atmosphere which is never ruffled by the agitation of contest; and longs for the undisturbed serenity of a world which affords no temptation to the exercise of an unhallowed disposition; where, from the infinite source of wisdom, he can drink in the full tide of knowledge, and from the fountain of peace derive a temper, the very reverse of alienation of affection and disunion of hearts—the temper of love.—"I am meditating," said the dying Hooker, "on the number and nature of angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven; and O! that it were so in the church on earth."—"I can as willingly," said Baxter, "be a martyr for *love* as for any article of the creed." When dying he prayed, "Bless, O! Lord, this distracted world; give peace to thy church, and preserve its interests on earth." What a comfort and sweetness is there in repeating the Lord's Prayer—"*let thy kingdom come!*"

We conclude with the following beautiful extract from an anonymous writer:

"I delight above all things to dwell upon the sublime

and beautiful idea of the *unity of the Christian church*, composed, as it is, of many members, but all united together under one great and glorious head; and I even love to caress the thought, as one that is most agreeable to my fancy, as well as to my heart and judgment. I am pleased to consider the church in the beautiful light in which our Saviour himself has chosen to present it. '*In my Father's house*,' says he, '*are many mansions*,' or apartments; and this is as true of his house upon earth, as it is of his house in heaven. The church is indeed a vast and magnificent edifice, which the all-wise and beneficent Creator has built upon a sure basis, for the accommodation of all his believing children; and I am ready to say or sing of it with the Psalmist, '*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth*,' is this palace. It has, of course, as becomes a royal residence, a great variety of apartments, of rooms and chambers of different sorts and styles, to suit the tastes and fancies of all the different members of the royal family. At the same time, too, it has some fine and noble halls and walks, and gardens all around it, for the common use and pleasure of them all. Now these apartments are free and open to us all, and we may look and choose among them as we like; and sure I am that they are all good; and I would rather be a 'door-keeper' in any one of them than reign and revel in the 'tents of wickedness.' Let every one choose his own apartment—wisely, of course—and keep it when he has taken it; and if he happens to think that he has chosen the very best in the whole house, let him make no boast, but give God thanks; and let him not quarrel with the choice of another, but rather let

him be satisfied with and rejoice in his own; and above all, let us all be careful to meet from time to time in those common halls, and walks, and gardens, and mingle our hearts, and souls, and spirits together."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HUNGRY SOUL.

"All joy to the believer! He can speak—
Trembling, yet happy; confident, yet meek.
Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root,
I never trusted in an arm but thine,
Nor hoped but in thy righteousness divine,
My prayers and alms, imperfect and defiled,
Were but the feeble efforts of a child;
Cleansed in thine own all-purifying blood,
Forgive their evil and accept their good;
I cast them at thy feet—my only plea
Is what it was—dependence upon thee."

It is surprising that any should have considered Christianity as addressed chiefly, if not exclusively, to the head, while its great demand is to the heart; that any should have been disposed to exclude almost all feeling as leading to enthusiasm, while the two great commands of Scripture are love to God, and love to man. True, religion is experimental; its doctrinal truths become practical principles, influencing the feelings, affections and passions of the whole man. However beautiful it may be in name, its excellency and energy are truly known only when it is experienced; however much it may be a system to be believed, yet it will be productive of little good unless it affect the heart, and its influence be felt in its application to our miseries and wants. Hence the usefulness of examining our own religious

experience and that of others, to know how far it accords with the revelation of God's will, and to what degree it is subduing our corruptions, leading us to devotion, and inciting us to duty.

The person with whom the following conversation took place, was a young man of remarkably tender conscience; who had a deep sense of the tendency of sin, a desire to "shun the appearance of evil," and a constant anxiety lest his conduct, in any manner, should "be an occasion of falling in another's way." About a year before the interview, he had made a profession of religion, and was respected and loved by the church. Having enjoyed from his childhood the unspeakable privilege of being "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," he had more than usual Christian knowledge; and to that pious education, after he became the subject of the Spirit's influences, may be ascribed the peculiar beauty and uncommon spirituality of his religion. Though young, he was to many of the elder members of the church an "example in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." He was one of those youthful disciples in whom I felt a peculiar interest; one that I supposed was raised up by Providence to shine with more than ordinary brightness, and exert a more than common influence in the church of Christ. With such hope I was anxious to give him counsel and direction in a way not afforded by my public and social ministrations, desirous privately to urge upon him the necessity of high attainments in religion, and suggest means by which greater spirituality could be reached. I mention this as a kind of apology for the *several* practical subjects which are here introduced; the particular manner

in which they are discussed, and the length to which some of the enquiries are extended; to fulfil my own wishes, and to benefit him. I invited him to visit me whenever I was at leisure, and in the freest manner to tell me any difficulties which he might meet with in his Christian course. An opportunity occurred. On one occasion he entered my study with a burdened heart and sad countenance, and soon made known his errand.

"I have called to see you respecting the state of my mind, and to have some conversation with you on the subject of my personal experience; I have great need of instruction and counsel."

"I should be glad to do you any good. But what has occurred? What particular difficulty have you met with?"

"I have wholly lost, it seems to me, my relish for divine things, and all communion with God; and have so declined that I no longer possess my former faith, and zeal, and love. It has been so for days, and even weeks."

"It is indeed a sad state; but you know the direction, "If any be afflicted, let him pray—call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will deliver you.'"

"That is the great difficulty—*I cannot pray*. I am inclined to neglect even the attempt; and if goaded by conscience to a throne of grace, and compelled by it to speak unto God, my heart is entirely unengaged; the duty is performed in a cold and formal manner; there is no *prayer*. It is dreadful to think of a Christian who has lost the spirit and disposition to pray! I cannot live without God, and yet I cannot converse with him; unless my soul feel his quickening and animating presence,

I cannot be happy; and yet that presence is withdrawn —it neither enlightens nor warms me—nor do I really *desire* it, for I cannot ask or seek it in prayer."

"It is indeed a sad state, and no wonder that you feel it to be the severest loss that you could have sustained; that you mourn so bitterly over the want of that which constitutes your true happiness. But you ought to be thankful that, while you are in this declining condition, you are in any degree sensible of it, and alarmed. To slumber and sleep, as David did after his criminal conduct, is awful. Sin is of a hardening nature—it stupefies and benumbs, shuts the eyes and hardens the heart. How many professors of religion have I known on whom it had this effect; they lost their zeal, and love, and interest in religious duties, and yet they were contented and unconcerned—an awful sign that religion was deeply languishing in their souls. Bless God if you are not like them; if you are sensible of your decays; if your eyes are open, and your soul impressed with a sense of your loss."

"I am sensible of it, and say with Job, 'O! that I were as in months past, when his candle shone upon my head!' O! to have my former experience of his goodness; my soul again in a healthful and vigorous condition! I know not how to be restored."

"I would affectionately say to you, as God said to Joshua, when he was prostrated at the footstool of mercy, because of the defeat of Israel at Ai: 'Get thee up and search for the accursed thing.' Search for the cause; say, 'why is it thus?' Exclaim with Job, 'Show me mine iniquity and my sin.' When God withholds the special influences of the Spirit, and when the

suspension of those influences destroys communion with him, withers our graces, and impairs the life of religion in the soul, we may be sure that we have, in some way, dishonoured him, and provoked him to leave us. If the patriarch of Uz was anxious to know why God contended with him, when he laid his hand sorely upon him, should not we be solicitous to examine into the reasons of spiritual declension, far more distressing than any bodily affliction? Christians, from sad experience, know that some sin cherished and indulged is sufficient to grieve the Holy Spirit, to lead him to take his departure, and to leave us in coldness and indifference. In your case I am sure that there have been no gross enormities; that your conscience does not charge you with any immorality or crime; but in a matter of this kind we must examine acts of omission, as well as commission; not merely the conduct, but also the heart. Look through it—look deep into it; and you may find some thought cherished, or temper indulged, which may be the ground of your present complaint."

"My heart is full of corruption, and my life of sin; I have little, perhaps no love to God, whom I take no pleasure in visiting, and who withholds his visitation from me."

"But the *particular* sin must be searched and discovered, which has destroyed that delight in duty and that spirituality of frame which you once enjoyed. If the heart be soured by unkindness, or disturbed by the commotions of anger, can we be surprised that prayer is attended with no profit? Can we, under the influence of sensuality, have any real devotion, when purity of heart is plainly indispensable to enter into the presence

of God? If we supremely love the world, and pursue its interests with ceaseless ardour, is it a strange thing to find that our hearts are bowed down to the earth; that there is no fire to consume the offering, and to make it a 'sweet-smelling' sacrifice to Heaven? If there be indulged any 'bitterness, envy, clamour, evil-speaking,' discontent or murmuring, can there be truly devotional feelings? If there be the least unforgiving temper towards an enemy, must not the spirit of prayer be hindered, and the petition rejected? If there be any self-righteous spirit, any trust in our duties, instead of entire confidence in the Redeemer; any self-complacency when we are either apparently humbled, or unusually comforted, will not the Saviour be dishonoured, and God provoked, and the Spirit grieved, and our souls left to sterility and unfruitfulness? Sins like these are peculiarly offensive; they harden the heart, benumb the conscience, and tarnish the soul. Examine, then, thoroughly—I do not mean now, but when you retire home and are alone with your God; and learn whether there be any one offence voluntarily committed, any one known duty omitted, any one secret iniquity indulged, unseen by the eyes of the world. What David said, each Christian can say; 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.'"

"Among the many sins that I have committed, and for which my conscience condemns me, it will be impossible, I fear, to discover the *particular* sin or corruption which has caused my complaint."

"It may not be as difficult as you imagine. 'Search and try your ways;' beg God to examine and prove your heart, permit conscience to operate freely, and 'be

sure, your sin will find you out.' Think of the time and manner in which you fell into this state of declension; and perhaps you may find some indulged corruption which then drove away the Holy Spirit, and which still occasions his departure; which, instead of being mortified, has grown stronger and stronger. Perhaps it is that sin which you are palliating and excusing, and which, for that reason, has gained and retained an awful predominancy over you—or that sin which is most agreeable to your nature, and against which you have never prayed and striven—or that sin which you are ashamed or unwilling heartily to confess to God, which rises to your remembrance when you attempt to pray, but whose enormous guilt, made known by your reason and conscience, you will not feel; whose malignity and heinousness you will not frankly acknowledge. This sin, whatever it may be, thoroughly search for and discover—lay your hand upon it, as the ground of the controversy between God and your soul; as committed against a Christian profession, peculiar mercies, remorse of conscience, and the convictions of the Spirit. Having discovered the iniquity, beware lest you excuse, or in any degree palliate it; if you do, the Spirit will be still more grieved, and the separation between God and your soul still more widened. Yet to this extenuation those in your situation are much exposed; their corrupt hearts suggest many excuses; in their estimation the iniquity is but small, and the temptation that led to it was powerful—more than 'flesh and blood' could resist. 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.' Instead of extenuating, rather look upon your sin with all its aggravations. Consider the evils which it has produced; observe

how it has polluted your soul, weakened your graces, and deprived you of strength, taken away all your spiritual enjoyments, quenched the flames of love, destroyed your holy resolutions, changed your peace into doubts, and your joys into fears, hindered prayer, prevented you from seeing God in your closet, and enjoying with him any communion. Surely we cannot wonder if God should be provoked, hide his face, and withdraw from us, when he sees us harboring his enemy—wishing to spare, and almost ready to love it. He does it justly, for he is holy; we *oblige* him to do it, and must love him for that infinite hatred to sin which is thus displayed. Shall he thus punish all his other children when they transgress, and shall he spare us? Having seen your sin, confess it before God. Let the confession be sincere, the effusion of a truly burdened conscience and afflicted soul; let it be free, not the forced confession of a malefactor upon the rack, but a voluntary disclosure; let it be full, presenting all the aggravations; let it be humble, accompanied with self-abhorrence and loathing. There may be much remorse of conscience, and deep dejection of soul, where there is no genuine contrition and sincere acknowledgment. We hear David saying: 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer: thine arrows stick within me, and thy hand presseth me sore; my wounds are corrupt, because of my foolishness.' But when he exclaimed, 'I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin,' lying at the footstool of God, he was dissolved in grief. Act thus; let no corruption or unbelief prevent you from knowing

and freely confessing the whole extent of your transgression. 'What profit have we in those things whereof we are now ashamed?' "

He was for some time silent and sad, and then said with great feeling: "It is all true—the effects of sin upon my heart are dreadful; how it has turned my glory into shame, my liberty into slavery, my peace of conscience into the bitterness of remorse! 'Behold, I am vile!' "

"You may have a view of the evil of sin in its effect upon your soul; in your withering graces, and the privation of all spiritual enjoyment; but there is another scene, my friend, which you should contemplate, to learn *all* its bitterness and malignity. Look to the cross of Christ—look and wonder—look, and raise higher indignation against all iniquity—behold the personally innocent Saviour there hanging, with his body covered with blood, and his heart wounded with anguish—abandoned by his friends, derided by his enemies, forsaken even by his God! What will open the springs of godly sorrow, like such a sight? What will dissolve the hardness of our hearts so effectually as the consideration of such love? What will cause us to 'mourn, as one mourneth for a first-born,' as 'looking upon him whom we have pierced?' By yielding to sin, harbouring it in our bosoms, and even casting upon it a pleasing glance, we are guilty, not only of violating the law, but of undervaluing the blood of the covenant. Shall Christ die for sin, and we indulge it? Did he for us bear this amazing suffering; and shall we not 'smite our breast,' and be pained at our very souls? What motive can be so effectual as this to lead us thoroughly

to hate sin, and utterly to renounce all iniquity? How can we retain those transgressions which were the true cause of our Redeemer's suffering; that were 'the betrayers and murderers of the Prince of life;' which rioted in his agonies, and kindled those flames which could be extinguished only with his blood? Go, then, to the foot of the cross—there learn the infinite evil of sin—there exercise a holy indignation against it—there remember that a saint is never so lovely in the estimation of Heaven, as when he is lying at that cross, covering his face with the wings of humility and reverence, 'abhorring himself, and repenting as in dust and ashes.' Return unto God through this Redeemer; cast all your guilt upon his atonement; feel that it is infinite; that it is satisfactory to Divine justice, and abundantly sufficient for your pardon. Despair not; you have an intercessor before the throne, a 'faithful and merciful High Priest;' think of his 'having laid upon him all our iniquities;' of his being 'able to save unto the uttermost;' of his 'blood cleansing from all sin.' Think how a merciful God expostulates and invites; 'O! that you had hearkened unto me; then your peace had been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.'—'Take with you words and turn unto the Lord, and say to him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; for in thee the fatherless find mercy.'—'I will receive you graciously, and love you freely; I will be as the dew unto Israel, and he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his fruits as Lebanon.' Take these texts into consideration; believe and apply them, that you may do no injury to the Divine mercies, the Saviour's merits, or your own comforts. Remember what a message our Lord sent to

Peter after his fall; what offers he made to Jerusalem, after it had murdered the Prince of life; how useful and happy David was made, after the commission of the most enormous crimes. What though your obedience be defective, so that you cry out, 'wo is me; I am undone!' turn your thoughts to the great Mediator's righteousness—that is perfect and divine, and was wrought out for you, that by it you might be justified. You say that your prayers are dull and languid—remember the intercession of Christ—he 'ever appears in the presence of God' for you; and how can that cause fail which has such an advocate? If the 'poor widow' was heard even by 'the unjust judge,' shall not the Son of God prevail, when he intercedes with a gracious Father, who loves both him and you? If you want repentance as you say you do, faith, holiness, spiritual life, 'Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give' all these blessings; he 'ascended on high to receive gifts for men, even the rebellious;' and it is his office to bestow them on poor sinners who desire them; will not the 'Father be glorified' in your return—in your 'bringing forth much fruit?' Will not the Saviour rejoice in giving rest to your weary soul, and causing praises to succeed your groans of sorrow? Will you not, by pursuing the scriptural method which has been suggested, find your soul eased, your heart purified, your spiritual liberty restored, and God returning to you in 'loving kindness and tender mercy?'"

I felt that I had said enough—we bowed together at a throne of grace, and confessed our sins before God, asked for pardon; prayed, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from us; restore to us the joys of thy salvation," and separated.

Several days elapsed before I again saw him; but

when we met, it was evident that he had experienced the truth of the promise: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble;" that, when he had offered the prayer, "God be merciful unto me, and bless me, and make his face to shine upon me," his request was granted; that "the loving kindness, which is better than life," of which he had been deprived, was restored to him.

Our conversation was resumed. I commenced by observing: "You have, I trust, found the 'promises exceeding great and precious,' the 'promises in Christ Jesus,' who is their author, glory and substance, and from whom they derive all their influence to comfort and purify; you have found that the 'wounded spirit he can heal,' to 'the weary' he can 'give rest,' to one deeply sensible of guilt he can grant pardon."

"I have seen and learned much since I have been with you, and I hope that the impression will never be removed; that I shall never again be in such darkness and distress."

"I would caution you, my friend, though I know not that you have particular need of such counsel, against reliance upon feelings and frames. It is surely incumbent on every Christian to obtain all the spiritual tranquillity and divine joy of which we are capable, in prosecuting the ways of God, and supporting us amidst difficulties and temptations. But *principle* should be the object of supreme attention; and if that be properly cultivated, sufficient enjoyment will necessarily follow. It is not the degree of comfort so much as the degree of grace which indicates the eminence of our piety. Let

us look well to the reality, purity and scriptural character of the principles by which we are governed; and then peace will succeed, 'the peace which passeth understanding;' perhaps 'joy in the Holy Ghost;' let us enquire not 'how do I *feel*—what comfort do I experience?' but 'how do I *act*—by what am I governed—what testimony does my *life* furnish of Christian simplicity and humility; of love to God and benevolence to man?' Interested as you know I am in you, I am desirous that you should have correct views on every part of religion. I am not one of those who are in the habit of telling young converts that their 'first love' must necessarily cool; that their full flow of affection to God must necessarily sink; that from the height of spiritual enjoyment they must necessarily descend. The apostles, it seems to me, did not act thus. When Barnabas visited the young Christians at Antioch, instead of leading them to expect a state of declension immediately after their reception of the Saviour, he 'exhorted them with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord;' and Paul's language to those who were converted through his instrumentality was, 'I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and all judgment.' There is no necessity in the nature of things for the abatement of your love, or zeal, or joy. On the contrary, I would say to you, if you be faithful, as the Saviour said to Nathaniel, 'you shall see greater things than these'—your love will be deeper, your faith firmer, your views of Christ and his gospel clearer. There is danger of the young forming a low and imperfect standard of religion from the conduct of professors around them, whose example may be to them a 'snare,' and a 'stumbling

block.' From the study of the Scriptures they should correct these mistakes, and after the great and exalted characters there found, form their conduct. Youth is the season when the noble and generous principles of our affections are in their fullest exercise; and when we are restrained by the narrow prejudices and passions of maturer age—what advantages, then, has it for growth in piety, when it contemplates the dignity, compassion and disinterestedness of the Saviour, in whom these and a thousand other exalted qualities shine? A flame of love is enkindled for him as the attractive centre of every grace; and if the warmth of natural affection be not substituted for holiness of heart; if it be a solid and permanent estimation of the Redeemer's character, instead of the effect of a fervid imagination, what attainments may they make in spirituality—what lustre shed upon religion! Let it be so with you. Have you made some advances in the Christian career? Have you, through Divine grace, obtained any conquests over your foes? Remember that much still remains to be accomplished, and that your victories must be followed up by new resistance and new triumphs."

"I do desire, I think, to 'grow in grace;' to have a deeper knowledge of my own heart, and the character of God; of the person and work of Christ, and the whole glorious plan of redemption."

"There is no reason why you should not grow in all these parts of the Christian character; why you should not advance in abhorrence of sin and love of holiness; in watchfulness and prayer; in lowliness and resignation; in benevolence and gentleness; in a stable peace and a more abiding hope; in the discharge of every rela-

tive duty, and higher usefulness in the church. You are planted in the 'garden of God'—let the tree flourish and 'bear fruit abundantly;' you are a candidate for heaven—become more and more meet for 'the inheritance of light.'"

"Are there not many considerations which urge this duty upon us?"

"There are. Higher attainments are possible; the same grace which made eminent saints what they are, is ready and sufficient for you and me; and each may say, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' How many examples have we in Scripture of high attainments in holiness—how remarkable was the grace of Enoch and Abraham, of Moses and Job, of Joshua and Samuel, of Paul and John! How many exhortations and promises have we on the subject! Such growth in religion enables us to glorify God, affords peculiar consolation, gives communion with Christ, grants fellowship with the saints, yields clear evidences of piety, and alone assures us of the safety of our condition. If we are not growing in grace, we are declining—there is no standing still—he who is not going forward is going backward. The stone which is to be forced up a hill must be constantly urged forward; or it will be carried down by its own weight. It is as necessary for us to 'press forward' with holy ardour, as it is for the soldier to be valiant in the fight, the wrestler to be eager in the struggle, or the racer to reach forth with exertion after the prize."

"It is not easy then to make this advance in religion, and thus unceasingly to go forward?"

"Far from it—it is the most difficult thing in the world. Some attendance on the means of grace; some

sincerity in prayer; some desires after holiness are insufficient—it demands resolute watchfulness, laborious diligence, painful conflicts, habitual mortification of sin, daily self-denial, constant sacrifices; and this to be continued until we 'awake in God's likeness.' Then, and not until then, the battle will be over, the victory won, the race finished, and the prize obtained."

"But what are the means by which I can advance? What general directions can you give which I shall be able to follow in the attainment of the object?"

"Learn, in the first place, what real growth in grace is. It consists not in the strictest performance of the external duties of religion, nor in the knowledge of Christian doctrine, nor in the most ardent zeal, nor in the most public profession, nor in the highest reputation for piety, nor in the greatest activity in prosecuting plans of usefulness. It extends farther than this—it consists in a growing conformity of the whole man to the will of God; in having less of corruption and more of the renewed nature, day by day; in becoming more like what Adam was in Paradise; more like what every saint is in glory; more like what Jesus Christ was, when he was on earth. It has no boundary here; no point where the Christian can stop—and his spiritual prosperity therefore is to be judged, not by any sudden or hasty steps, but by a constant and habitual progress. In attaining such growth, it is scarcely necessary to urge diligence in the use of what are termed the 'ordinary means of grace'—prayer, self-examination, the study of the Scriptures, the observance of the Sabbath, and attendance upon the ministrations of the sanctuary. In the performance of such duties, we must not be

slothful nor formal, but punctual, serious, watchful, that we may 'renew our strength, while waiting upon God.' Is it necessary to give other directions? Guard against the beginnings of sin—dread the smallest departure from the Christian faith—watch against the least decay of spiritual affections—obey the voice of conscience in the smallest matters—guard against the 'sin which doth easily beset' you, to which you are, in a high degree, exposed from your natural temperament, disposition, age, and the peculiar circumstances in which you are placed. Beware of the indulgence of a captious and censorious temper; for it will do much to check the exercise of pious affections—avoid every degree of a selfish and ungenerous spirit; for religious feeling will be weak, in proportion to the strength of this unworthy principle. When a Christian, unmindful of what he owes to the comfort of others, studies only to please himself, and cares not how the feelings of others are wounded, if his own be gratified, he shall assuredly miss his object: the enjoyment which he seeks shall flee from him, and he will find that *he is not permitted to be happy who seeks the happiness of none but himself.* In the use of these directions, be sensible of your entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit; trust only in his operations; and feel that as necessary as are the means of grace, they derive all their efficacy from his power. You know that nothing good is found in fallen man, that nothing but evil grows spontaneously in that soil; that if there be any thing holy, it is produced by the Spirit of God who 'worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' His divine influence is not the less necessary in prosecuting the work which he has begun; for such is our proneness

to relax our exertions, to grow weary and faint in our course, that we need to be continually 'strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' To grow in grace, we must be established in the great doctrines of Christianity. It is the Spirit who enlightens, and 'guides us into all truth'—he reveals indeed nothing that is new, and that is not found in the book of Revelation; but by a holy influence upon the mind, he manifests and clearly presents what had been hidden from us by pride, prejudice, or hardness of heart. To advance in religion is to grow in all the Christian graces and virtues. That Spirit who is the author of these graces can alone actuate and excite them, and when dormant, rouse them into exercise. By presenting the truths of the Gospel in a manner penetrating and transforming; unfolding the character, providence, promises, and covenant of God; exhibiting the grace and glory of the Redeemer, he calls into vigorous action our faith, hope, gratitude, and love; and fills our souls with admiration and joy. By some signal mercy, he incites us to thankfulness and praise; by some severe affliction, he awakens us to consideration and thoughtfulness: when we are languid, he quickens us; when we are wandering, he brings us back; when we are declining, he grants us fresh supplies of grace; and thus enables us to 'rise and shine;' to show that the lamp will burn brightly, when furnished with new oil. As all true Christians need no other argument for human corruption but their own experience, so they need no other proof but this of these operations of the Spirit. They have known and felt him thus enlivening their hope, and strengthening their faith; comforting them in reproaches, and supporting them in temptation; becom-

ing to them the earnest, pledge, and foretaste of the heavenly kingdom. In this manner 'the Spirit helpeth our infirmities;' that is, as the original word implies, *aids us to bear the burden of our sorrows by taking hold of it on one side*—intimating how effectual is his relief, and how necessary that we should exert, in concurrence with him, all the strength which we possess. But it is especially in prayer that he aids us, as the apostle says: 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.' It is his office, as distinct from the Father and the Son, to help us in our devotional exercises; and hence he is called 'the Spirit of grace and supplication;' hence we are exhorted by Jude to 'pray in the Holy Ghost;' and by Paul, to 'pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.' We shall be unable, without him, to overcome our natural reluctance to the duty; to make any effort, or put forth any resolution to attempt a service so spiritual and holy. Without him we shall have no suitable and well-adapted matter for prayer; we shall ask what, if granted, would tend to our injury; consult merely our wishes, without regarding the Divine glory; forget petitions which should be presented, and neglect blessings that ought to be implored. Without him we shall err in manner, when we approach 'the mercy-seat;' enter upon the duty distracted by worldly cares and sinful passions; have no distinct apprehension of the Divine character, no adequate views of our unworthiness and guilt, no clear sense of the fulness and power of the Redeemer, no feeling perception of our multiplied wants; we shall find our thoughts wandering,

our hearts cold, our spirits oppressed, our 'souls cleaving to the dust'—and if we are not at once answered, we shall 'faint' and be discouraged."

"Dreadful indeed is our situation without him! If he be not present, there can be no life, power, or enjoyment in prayer. I wonder not that David prayed so fervently—'Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.'

"Without him we cannot pray; our cries will be only a solemn mockery to Heaven. But blessed be God that we are not left to ourselves under the wretchedness and ruin of our fallen nature; that there is a power which can raise and support us; that we have the promise of the Holy Spirit to help us; the great promise of the new dispensation, constituting the peculiar privilege of the Christian church. Whenever we pray acceptably, this Holy Spirit, no doubt, dwells within us, influences our understandings, affects our hearts, and thus teaches us that he is, in a degree, the author of our prayers. The Scriptures, in many places, tell us that our light and life, warmth and comfort, come from him—that 'God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father'—that is, has sent the Holy Spirit to incline and dispose us, when we pray, to call God our Father; tell us that 'the effectual' or *inwrought* prayer (as the original word implies) 'availeth much'—the prayer that is *wrought within us by the Spirit*, possessing, guiding, directing, and exciting us. 'He maketh intercession for us'—not in the sense in which Jesus Christ does; not with the Father, but with our spirits; not in heaven, but in our souls; not in presenting to God in our behalf an atoning sacrifice, but in presenting to us wants and desires, arguments and pleas; not in purify-

ing our devotions and offering them for acceptance, but by inditing our prayers for us, not in a book, but in our hearts. *He does what a faithful advocate does for a client—dictate what he ought to say, and how he should present his cause.* In executing this office, he inclines our hearts to pray, overcomes our natural reluctance, enlarges our desires, excites holy breathings toward Heaven, and thus enables us to 'stir up ourselves to lay hold upon God.' The Spirit says: 'Seek the Lord while he is to be found;' the soul under his influence responds: 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' The Spirit says: 'Come, for all things are ready;' the soul answers: 'Lord, I come, I come quickly.' The Spirit says: 'Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he will strengthen thy heart; wait, I say, upon the Lord;' the soul responds: 'I will wait upon thy name, O! Lord, for it is good.' The Spirit says: 'Return, thou backsliding child, and I will heal thy backslidings;' the soul answers: 'Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.' The Holy Spirit enlightens and teaches us how, and for what, we should pray; gives us strong views of God, ourselves, and our wants; brings to our remembrance the declarations of Scripture, intimates what arguments we should plead, what promises we should present, what sins we should confess, and what blessings we should implore. He excites those particular graces which accord with the duty of prayer, and which are necessary for its acceptance. When sin is remembered, and made the subject of confession, he incites shame and sorrow; when mercies are recalled, he awakens all the springs of gratitude; when afflictions are spread before the Lord, he inspires submission and

resignation; when the excellencies of the Saviour, and the work of redemption, rest feelingly upon the heart, he calls forth admiration and faith, gratitude and love; when the promises are brought to mind in all their variety and extent, he enables us to lay hold of them by faith. You recollect that the apostle adds: 'He maketh intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered'—groanings not of the Spirit, but of the petitioner, the subject of his influences. I suppose that the meaning is this: he, at times, inspires believers with such intense ardour and holy desires, such inward pleading with God, as cannot be expressed in words. Some desires are too mighty to be uttered; language is not expressive enough to give them form or sound, or ability to be spoken. When such emotions are excited by the Spirit, the believer vents them only in 'groanings that cannot be uttered.' Sometimes his pantings after pardon and holiness, Christ and heaven, are so strong and fervid that the soul takes the loftiest flight; and, collecting all its force, bears itself towards God in thoughts, and sighs, and groans, too big for utterance. Sometimes he has such a heartfelt perception of his sins, of their number, desert, and influence, that he is wholly overwhelmed by the sight; and instead of acknowledging them with his lips, confesses and laments them only in mournful and penitential breathings. Sometimes he has so vivid an exhibition of the glory of that God whom he addresses, that, like Elijah, he can only 'fall upon his face,' and silently 'adore and tremble.' Sometimes he is so inspired with the Spirit which leads 'angels to rejoice over one sinner that repenteth; so solicitous for the cause of Christ; so intensely concerned for the salvation of the impenitent,

that his *soul* only can exclaim: 'How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?' But how delightful the thought that such prayers are the most pleasing and acceptable that can ascend to the throne of Majesty; to know that our Heavenly Father reads the language of the Holy Spirit in every tear thus shed, every sigh thus uttered, every groan thus vented!"

"If 'the Spirit thus help our infirmities, and make intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered,' how I should love to know when he is present with me in prayer! Such knowledge of his presence would fully satisfy me that I was a child of God, give me assurance of my acceptance, lead me steadily to depend on him, and encourage my expectation of all future supplies."

"You may know that he is present, if you have a deep sense of your wants, the imperfection of your duties, the power of sin within you, and your utter inability to resist its influence. You may know it, if you have a clear view of the glories of the Gospel, the blessings of the covenant, the fulness of Christ, the excellency of his salvation, and the glory of his promises. You may know it, if you have the feelings and dispositions which become such a duty and privilege; if you have the humility which Abraham had when pleading for Sodom, and the awe and reverence which possessed the souls of Moses and Elijah when they had a glimpse of the divine glory; if you can sink into nothing, as did Job, when he exclaimed: "Behold, I am vile." You may know it, if you are enabled to pray with earnestness and importunity; to cry from the very heart, as did the publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' to exclaim, with all the ardour of the disciples, 'Master, save us—we

perish;' to continue pleading, as did the woman of Canaan, and, like her, to turn discouragements into arguments. Who but the Spirit can enable Christians to take strong hold of the promises, and to plead them confidently before God? You may know it, if you pray in the name of Christ; depend entirely upon him for acceptance; rely wholly upon his sacrifice as sufficient; and plead nothing but his merits for the bestowal of every blessing. To exercise such faith; thus to lie down in the dust of humility, and exalt the Redeemer, is more than a creature, in himself, can do. You may know it, if in prayer you have a sweet acquiescence in God, and a pure love to him; if you can rest in him as an all-sufficient portion, and say with sincerity, 'Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee—thou art all my salvation, and in thee do I trust; do with me as seemeth good in thy sight—if it be for thy glory that the affliction which is threatened should come upon me, or that this trial which I am now suffering should continue, I would not dictate, nor presume to direct—thy will be done—thou art dealing well with thy servant, according to thy word.'"

"O! what a privilege to have the Holy Spirit always with us, when we pray! How happy would his presence make us—inconceivably more happy than if we possessed the whole world—how our corruptions would be subdued, and our natures sanctified—our whole soul brought into conformity to God—every want supplied, and every blessing enjoyed—all needful grace so increased as to yield the 'abundant fruits of righteousness.'"

"And why should we not always have his presence? If, in our addresses to God, he be ever absent, whom

have we to blame but ourselves? Have we not the promise, 'your Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask'—give with all the bounty of an affectionate parent—give his pure, transforming, humbling influences—his light, help and comfort? Here lies the whole peace, joy and triumph of the Christian life."

"I do not know enough of the Holy Spirit—his gifts, graces and helps—nor study sufficiently his character and operations—nor feel enough my entire dependence on him."

"It is too much the case with us all; and it is the reason why we have such limited degrees of grace. It is astonishing that Christians should so little think and speak of this almighty agent who performs so important a part in their salvation. Jesus Christ has 'purchased the church with his blood;' but the Holy Spirit prepares and conducts it; he has a stated office which he has executed, and will continue to execute, 'even unto the end of the world;' he is the author of all grace; the principle and fountain of all vital religion; his agency and principal employment is to 'convince of sin' and renew our natures; to subdue our iniquities, and 'mortify the deeds of the body;' 'to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts;' to 'sanctify us wholly' in all our faculties; to 'transform us into the Divine image;' to 'seal us unto the day of redemption;' to be an 'earnest of an incorruptible inheritance'—in a word, we are to expect from him all 'the fruits of goodness, righteousness and truth.' The Scripture is the book which he has peculiarly indited, and which we can understand only by his teaching. He is the glory and the Shechinah of the Christian church—the great bond of union to God—

the principal mark of our spiritual adoption—a more certain indication of our piety, than if an angel were to descend from heaven, and assure us that we were the heirs of immortal glory. Let us remember that we are under infinite obligations to our Sanctifier as well as our Redeemer; and let his love be the theme of our devout meditation, and the subject of our highest praises! Though the Holy Spirit takes possession of every soul that is effectually called, according to the promise, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes;' yet he does not at once accomplish his work; he enkindles in the heart a Divine flame, and then preserves and feeds it—the Divine graces, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, patience, meekness' are not the effects of an instantaneous and single operation, but the result of many repeated influences, concurring with the providences and word of God—a reason why we should not rest in that grace that we possess, but daily wait and look for additional supplies. These supplies are granted in different degrees, in proportion to the use and improvement that is made of the Spirit's help—'to him that hath, it shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not'—that is, does not improve what he has—'from him shall be taken away that which he hath.' Here, as in temporal things, the diligent hand maketh rich'—great blessings are always procured by great efforts—it is the order of nature which the will of our Creator has ordained, and which Christianity assuredly does 'not destroy, but fulfils.' The more humble, watchful, and circumspect the Christian is, the more he abounds in 'the fruits of the Spirit;' the more he is inspired with wisdom, strengthened with

courage, and animated with comfort. Sometimes these graces are imparted to fit Christians for the peculiarly difficult duties to which they are called; to raise them above all timorousness and discouragement; to give them a deep conviction that the hand of God is with them; and to make them feel what the apostle felt, that 'God's strength is magnified in their weakness;' that it appears in greater glory, because of their nothingness. Sometimes the blessing is given to prepare them for some heavy affliction which is approaching; to make their souls ready for the conflict; to furnish them with grace for 'the time of need.' Thousands, from experience, can attest this truth; can remember peculiar communion with God enjoyed in retirement, and unusual consolations 'shed abroad in the heart,' just before a severe and unexpected trial. This clothed them with armour in the day of conflict, made the 'burden light,' and carried them through the dark dispensation with an ease and acquiescence, a calmness and serenity which made them 'a wonder unto many,' and 'a wonder' to themselves. Sometimes the blessing is given in the season of worship; and then extraordinary light and comfort attend the Divine ordinances, the Christian is 'made joyful in the house of prayer,' and triumphant at the Lord's table; he enjoys a 'peace which passeth all understanding;' he feels the Spirit breaking in upon his soul with flashes of joy; warming it with beams of comfort, breathing into it the inspirations of heaven, shedding through it a thousand rich consolations. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'—freedom from guilt, freedom from fear. How eager should we be to secure continually,

without a moment's intermission, this privilege and glory of the Christian; how desirous to have his influences never withdrawn; how willing to endure any chastisement or rebuke, rather than the suspension of his presence; how ready to suffer any thing rather than to be shut out from the light of his countenance, and the joys of his salvation!"

He remained silent, evidently engaged in deep thought, and then exclaimed, "'One thing do I desire of the Lord, and that will I seek after all the days of my life'—the gifts, graces, and consolations of the Holy Spirit; a larger supply, and a greater unction of his influences; a feeling evidence that he is near me, as a sanctifier, comforter, and dispenser of strength—without him I cannot perform my devotions with life, discharge my Christian duties with cheerfulness, or oppose my spiritual enemies with success."

"You can—*can* obtain the object of your desire—your 'heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask'—plead the promise, beg for the blessing, prostrate at his footstool—take with you his own words: 'Pour out thy Spirit on me from on high, and then the wilderness shall become a fruitful field'—'Grant me according to the riches of thy glory, that I may be strengthened with might in the inner man'—thus pleading, you will be heard—the Holy Spirit will be with you, and give you power and ability to do and suffer all to which you may be called—his supply will enable you to conflict with every enemy, baffle every temptation, and mortify every lust; to pass through prosperity without elation, and adversity without sinking—in a word, to

perform all the duties of the Christian life in a manner acceptable to God, useful to others, and cheerful to yourself."

"I will pray for him, and pray earnestly, and, God helping me, will never be satisfied without him; I would ever be his 'temple;' would always 'live in the Spirit,' and act under his direction; would 'walk in the fear of the Lord, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost.' But when I look back upon my devotions, and remember that the Spirit only indites acceptable petitions, and that all availing prayer is his 'intercession,' I fear that much that I offered was only mockery to God."

"There is no doubt that much which is considered by the world as prayer, is not so regarded by the omniscient God—that there is often much 'service of the body,' much bending of the knee, much expression of the lips, but no prayer, because the Holy Spirit is absent; much outward form and invention of mind, but no pious emotion of the heart. Though it may be called devotion, yet it is a mere body without the soul, a shadow without the substance. They who present such an offering, are spoken of in Scripture—'This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and worshippeth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.'"

"When we consider our entire dependence upon the Spirit, and remember that prayer is his 'helping our infirmities,' and 'making intercession for us;' may we not easily assign a reason why Christians pray differently at different times?"

"There is no doubt that we can account for it upon this principle. Sometimes they seem to force themselves to the duty, and when they engage in it, find

themselves ignorant and cold, formal and lifeless—they have no enlightened apprehension of the character of God, no deep sense of their wants, no eager longings for Divine grace, no fervent desires for supplies from above, no lively impression of the sublimity and sanctity of the service. The reason is obvious—the Spirit is not present to 'help their infirmities,' and they 'know not what to pray for as they ought.' By some sin they have grieved and offended him, and he withdraws his influences; and though they kneel, and raise their hands, and speak, yet they do not *pray*, for the Holy Spirit has fled. At other times they have warm devotion, come cheerfully to the mercy-seat, and hear their covenant Father saying, 'Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you'—'Whatsoever ye shall ask in the name of my Son, believing, ye shall receive;' they 'draw near with full assurance of faith,' through the mediation of Jesus; and find their souls melted with penitence, or glowing with thankfulness; they make mention of his character, perfections, and promises; they speak to him of the wonders of creation, the wisdom of Providence, and the mystery of redemption; they cast all the burden of their cares upon this almighty Friend, who is able to sustain it, and find that 'in his presence there is fulness of joy.' They arise from their knees, saying, 'It is good to be here'—'I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications'—sensibly feeling how precious are the hours of prayer, and how delightful a spot is the closet. It is because the Holy Spirit is there to 'help their infirmities,' and to 'make intercession for' them. There may be many defects and imperfections in the service; but the Holy Spirit is there; and they may perhaps as

certainly know it, as they know that the sun shines, because they see its light, and enjoy its influence. Happy for them, if after such seasons they are humble and circumspect, guard against spiritual pride, and attribute not to themselves what should be ascribed to the operations of the Spirit."

"How careful should I be in my conduct to the Holy Spirit, lest I offend him, and provoke him to withdraw his protection!"

"You should, my friend, be peculiarly cautious. As he is your Helper, Guide, Comforter, in one sense, Intercessor, cherish carefully all his motions; listen to his whispers when he would convince you of sin; comply with his dictates, when he would lead you to duty. He is your friend—a tender and valuable friend; anxious for your welfare, watchful over your interests, willing to promote your happiness and peace: he is susceptible of offence when neglected—'grieve him not' by acting contrary to his desires, or opposing the tendency of his influences; by slighting his admonitions, or refusing to take heed to his suggestions; by any deliberate or wilful sins. How ungrateful, unwise, and criminal would it be to offend *him!* If he withdraw his consolation, what other comforter can 'revive in the midst of trouble?' If he cease to instruct, what other teacher can enlighten our mind? If he refuse to lead, what other guide can safely conduct us through the wilderness? If we offend him in our intercourse with the world, he will withhold his presence in the sanctuary and in the closet; if we grieve him as a 'Spirit of holiness,' he will forsake us as a 'Spirit of supplication;' if we comply not with the gentle insinuations of his grace, leading us to light and

purity, he will leave our souls, like the fleece of Gideon, without any spiritual dew, sterile and unfruitful. But while all wilful sin displeases him, it would appear, from Scripture, that some sins more directly 'grieve' him; of which you should scrupulously beware. Such is the tendency of evil and malignant passions. No sooner does the apostle say, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,' than he adds, as if to indicate his meaning, 'let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.' The Spirit is a Spirit of love; his fruits are meekness, gentleness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness; he dwells in no heart where wrath and anger reside; he will be with you only when you are cultivating mild, peaceable, and charitable dispositions—as he is a God of purity, sensuality is peculiarly offensive to him; he is driven away by the 'pollution of the flesh and spirit,' even when indulged in the heart. As he is 'the Spirit of truth,' every instance of deceit and falsehood provokes him to withdraw his grace—when Ananias and Sapphira were thus guilty, it is said that 'they lied unto the Holy Ghost.' If your conscience be enlightened by the word of God, its admonitions are the admonitions of the Spirit—resist not its dictates, and if it even suggest some doubts of the lawfulness of an act, abstain from it. Rush not into temptation—go not, uncalled by the providence of God, into places and scenes where you may be exposed; if you do, you thwart the design of your best friend, 'grieve the Spirit,' and provoke him to abandon you to the consequences of your folly and perverseness. Eve fell by incautiously suffering her ears to listen to the tempter's voice, and her eyes to gaze on the

forbidden fruit. Peter fell by imprudently venturing into the very place where his courage would be put to the severest trial. When temptation assails you, attempt not to resist it in your own strength, but cry fervently to the Holy Spirit to 'help your infirmities.' A faithful sentinel, discovering the approach of an enemy, attempts not to oppose them himself; but at once informs the commander, and leaves him to employ means for repelling the foe. Act in like manner, and when you see your spiritual enemies approaching, tell God of it in prayer; ask him to provide a way for their resistance, and to 'perfect his strength in your weakness.'"

"But if we maintain this absolute dependence on the Spirit, may not some so pervert the doctrine, as to suppose that they may be inactive, unconcerned; neglectful of the duties of religion?"

"It may be abused, like all the other doctrines of Scripture; but it is not a just inference from the view which has been taken of the Spirit's help; for we are to 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling, while he worketh within us.' They who indulge such sloth on account of the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit, give certain evidence that he is not *their* Guide, Teacher, Comforter and Intercessor; for when he effectually acts upon the soul, he excites it to diligence; when he imparts special aid, as I have already told you, he gives it to those who are active, diligent, and persevering in the use of means; when he grants a victory, he 'teaches our hands to war, and our fingers to fight.'"

"Should we omit prayer, except when we feel the present impulse of the Spirit?"

"By no means;" for we are required to 'pray al-

ways'—to be 'instant in prayer.' When the season arrives in which you are accustomed to have intercourse with God, go forward to the duty, whatever may be your feelings, however great your difficulties; and, in the attempted service, you may find hinderances removed and your graces quickened; you may obtain an unction, a fervour, and an enlargement both of thought and expression, which will feelingly convince you that there is a Holy Spirit that 'helpeth our infirmities.' My friend, what encouragement you have to pray! You have the blood of the High Priest speaking for you in heaven, and the Spirit of God speaking for you on earth; and the more you depend on this intercessor in your heart, and on that intercessor before the throne, the more prevalent will be your supplications with the Holy One. Praise will be your peculiar work in the church triumphant above; let prayer be your predominant employment in the church militant below. Say with David, (and may God give you strength to keep the resolution!) 'I will give myself unto prayer.' "

For several years this pious youth continued under my pastoral instruction. I saw him, as he advanced in years, pressing forward with diligence in the Christian course, visibly making great attainments in holiness, and going on "from strength to strength," in conformity to God and usefulness to man. I saw him settled in the world, and knew him afterwards in those changes which we must all undergo in this mutable state; knew him in health and sickness, prosperity and adversity, suffering from the buffetings of Satan, and afflicted by spiritual darkness; and I found him "steadfast and immoveable;" watching over his conduct with severe scrutiny, and contending

for a victory over all his corruptions; tenderly conscientious, and deeply affected by the omission of a single duty; his life marked in an extraordinary degree by a reference to the will of God as the rule of his conduct, and to the influence of the Spirit as the only source of strength and peace.

> "Where'er he went
> This lesson still he taught, to fear no ill
> But sin, no being but Almighty God."

If he be still living, I doubt not he is still "following on to know the Lord;" and I trust, like Caleb, following him "fully"—"faint," in his own estimation, and yet "pursuing"—sometimes shedding tears of contrition, and sometimes tears of joy; still longing for the supplies of the Spirit, and from experience knowing that there is a Divine Agent who "helpeth our infirmities and maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered."

The foregoing interviews and conversation suggest several reflections.

1. We are reminded of that *internal conflict* which is experienced by every true Christian. His heart is a field of battle, in which two opposite principles are contending: one, the corrupt nature, in which he was born, that is not entirely extinguished, and which is struggling to obtain the mastery; the other, that grace which was implanted in regeneration, that destroys the dominion, though not the existence of sin, and which is the source of all holy desires, good thoughts, and pious actions. This is real and vital piety—it is not, as some imagine, a state of continued sorrow, nor, as others fondly fancy,

a state of uninterrupted joy; it is rather a mixture of both, a conflict "between the flesh and the spirit," humbling us on account of what is in ourselves, and filling us with joy on account of what is in Christ; oppressing us deeply by a sense of our sins, and yet inspiring us with gratitude for what has been done for us.

This conflict is painful in its nature, and, to the Christian, a source of the deepest abasement. Can any thing be more humiliating to him who truly loves God and desires to please him, than an inability to attain what he proposes; to find himself always beneath the object of his wishes; to feel in himself secret inclinations which oppose the progress of his graces; a weight of corruption which arrests the flight of his soul towards heaven, and continually draws him back towards sensible and forbidden objects?—"What!" is his language, "I am called to be pure, to bear the image of the Holy One, to imitate his perfections, to live in communion with him—this constitutes my joy and glory—to elevate me to this high rank, God has revealed himself to me—for this, Jesus Christ came into the world, died, arose, ascended, and intercedes—to attain this end, he has left me his word, example, and ordinances—for this, he has promised me his grace and Spirit. I acknowledge the value and efficacy of all these means, and desire to improve them—for this purpose I watch, pray, and examine my heart, but arrive not at the end of my calling; 'I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity;' I am continually meeting with some passion to combat, some weakness to reform, some stain which dishonors my graces; I find my habits of piety feeble and imperfect, and yet am sensible

that I am capable of far higher degrees of holiness. 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' It is his grief and burden—the subject of the most poignant sorrow and the deepest humiliation. What causes him thus to weep? Not that which attracts the eye and arrests the attention of others, but the hidden evils of his heart.

> "His warfare is within—there evermore
> His fervent spirit labours."

But this conflict, however painful, is yet honorable in its principle; an indication of our being under the tuition of God; an evidence of adoption into his family. It affords a new view of the beauties and excellencies of Scripture, the best characters in which were exercised with the same trials; the promises of which are peculiarly delightful, because directed particularly to those who are maintaining the same conflict, and travelling through the same hostile country. It is also an evidence that we are not of the multitude who are hastening in the downward road to destruction. To them sin is no burden—it is their element, in which they find pleasure—*they* never sigh over the corruptions of their nature—they never express desires of deliverance from their iniquities, for they have never felt their evil—they know not what it is to mourn the absence of God, for they have never had the joys of his presence. But the true Christian is alive to all these feelings; regards them as proofs that he is not left to perish in his sins; and knows that if the soul be alive to God, it will be either enjoying his countenance, or lamenting the absence of its light. If his

sins are a just cause of sorrow, his sorrow on account of sin is a just cause of joy; and the more he cries, "O! wretched man that I am—who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" the more reason has he to add, "Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Those who have made the highest attainments in piety, are those who the most painfully feel this inward conflict; who often sorrowfully exclaim: "I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind—when I would do good, evil is present with me;" who, while they have sufficient evidence that they are the subjects of Divine grace, still feel that they are exposed to remaining depravity; that their corruptions are striving to gain the ascendancy over their better principles and to deprive them of communion with their Heavenly Father. The higher their views of God, the deeper will be their self-condemnation, because from the very light that surrounds them, the more distinct will be the view of their imperfections and sins.—"I feel daily," said the devout Beveridge, "that my tears require to be washed in the blood of Christ, and that my repentance needs to be repented of."—The spiritually-minded Doddridge, who habitually lived so near to God, had the same humility and deep sense of his sins—the esteem of the world, instead of elating his mind, only produced more lowly self-abasement. In one of his last letters to his friend Orton, written not very long before his death, he says: "I have great need of using the Publican's prayer, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner;' to me an unprofitable servant, who have deserved long since to have been cast out of his family. I am weak and unsta-

ble as water. My frequent deadness and coldness in religion sometimes presses me down to the dust; and methinks it is best when it does so. How could I bear to look up to heaven, were it not for the righteousness and blood of a Redeemer? I have been reading the life of excellent Mr. Brainerd, and it has greatly humbled and quickened me. Pray for me, that God may fill my soul with his presence; that Christ may live and reign in my heart, and that love to him and zeal for him may swallow up every other passion; that I may have more confirmed resolutions for the best of masters; of whom, when I get a lively view, I know not how to have done thinking or speaking of him."

2. How great is *the difference between the conflict in the believer's heart, and that which is maintained by the unrenewed sinner.* The latter does seem at times to struggle against sin, to mourn over it, and to strive to forsake it—sometimes the understanding opposes the passions; sometimes conscience combats the will; sometimes one passion is labouring against the gratification of another. But he contends against sin only because it leads to misery; trembles as did Ahab, only because of the Divine denunciations; shudders, as did Felix, only on account of "judgment to come;" knows no higher motive than self-love, and no other principle than fear of the vengeance of the Almighty. The Christian, on the contrary, contends with sin not merely because it is dangerous, but because it is odious; not merely because God will punish it, but because it is contrary to his law; not merely because it is opposed to his own future happiness, but because it is repugnant to his present inclinations and desires. The sinner struggles against gross

transgressions, sins that startle the conscience, and offences that would be productive of ignominy and loss; but he is not strenuous in resisting those that are secret, reputable, or that are deemed small—he is always ready to plead, "Spare it, for it is a little one;" always reserving some Agag from the general devastation. The Christian, on the contrary, makes peace with no sin, and opposes the whole host of iniquities—pursues with hostility those that are secret as well as those that are public; those that are found in the heart, as well as those which are manifested to the world; those that are sanctioned by custom and interest, as well as those that would disgrace him among men. The means which the sinner employs in the conflict are worldly fears and selfish hopes; but faith, hope and love are the weapons employed by the Christian in the spiritual contest. The natural combat is followed by no victory—however long it be maintained, sin is still loved and practised—it leaves its subject equally exposed to the next temptation that assaults him. Ahab, notwithstanding the temporary horror of his conscience, and outward humiliation, found sin soon reviving in all its vigour; and Herod's struggles restrained him not from imbruing his hands with the blood of John the Baptist. The spiritual conflict, on the contrary, always tends to mortify the power and subdue the strength of sin, fortifies the believer against corruption, and by accustoming him to the use of his weapons, teaching the arts of his enemies, inspiring with courage, and giving a full experience of the Spirit's help, prepares him to "bear hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."—The corruptions of the sinner, left to themselves, or nursed in self-indulgence, are daily

gaining strength, and are like the "cloud" seen by the prophet, which at first was of the size of a "man's hand," but which at length covered and darkened the whole sky. The corruptions of the Christian, on the contrary, are like the fig-tree, withering under the curse of the Redeemer. Every day sees the transgressor fitter for destruction; every day sees the believer riper for glory; until at length the voice of Judgment is heard, and the one passes away to eternal happiness, and the other to everlasting misery.

3. *How dear is the expectation of heaven to those who are engaged in the spiritual conflict.* Our situation would indeed be sad, if these combats were to endure forever; if sin, this "evil and bitter thing," were always to cleave to us, withering our joys, obscuring our graces, and preventing a near access to the mercy-seat. Here we fluctuate between hope and fear; often hang our harps upon the willows, water our couch with tears, and suffer all the fury of the tempest. But blessed be God, the warfare is not always to continue—there is a day of triumph and season of rest. God has promised it—the Saviour has purchased it—the Holy Spirit prepares us for its enjoyment—the declaration of the Redeemer is "yea, and amen"—"He that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne, even as I also overcame, and sit down with my Father upon his throne."

This state of perfect holiness, succeeding one of imperfection and sin, should be ever before our eyes, and the constant object of our aspirations. How should we sigh for that happy moment which shall put an end to all our combats, and change our groans and tears of sorrow into songs of victory and triumph! "What!" may

every Christian say—"a day is coming when I shall no longer experience that mournful opposition of 'the flesh' which now afflicts me—no longer be checked in my progress by the weight of corruption—no longer have any other desire but that of serving, pleasing and obeying God. 'I would not live alway,' to mourn over the remains of depravity, to lament the perverseness of my will, the hardness of my heart, the blemishes of my prayers, the weakness of all my graces, and the inactivity of all my powers. 'I would not live alway' to complain of a 'law in my members, warring against the law of my mind;' to be obliged daily to exclaim, 'O! wretched man that I am!' I hate this 'body of sin,' and wish it to be thoroughly removed. I would look with grateful expectation to heaven, as the region of perfect purity; where there are no more doubts and fears, no more coldness and indifference in the Saviour's service; where there is not one hard heart or languid worshipper; for all, in that immortal residence, are under the immediate rays of the 'sun of righteousness.' I would be there, where there is no spiritual darkness; where I shall be illumined by the glory of God; where the light of his countenance shall shine upon every step that I take, brighten all my way, and secure me from ever again wandering from the path of righteousness. I would be there, where the noblest desire of my heart shall be fulfilled; where I shall be clothed with the robes of perfect purity; where the severest scrutiny of the seraphim can discern in me no vestige of pollution; where I shall love God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind;' and where he shall reveal to me all the strength and tenderness of his affection, and enkindle

within me a flame so intense as is known only to angels, and the 'spirits of the just made perfect.' Hail, happy day, when it shall be thus with me; when this 'earthly tabernacle' shall be dissolved, and I shall be delivered from my sins and sorrows; when I shall no more need promises or threatenings—the one to comfort, the other to quicken me; when I shall have glorious and uninterrupted views of my Redeemer, and the sweetest, fullest manifestations of his power and love! Hail, happy period, that shall re-unite me to pious friends, the remembrance of whom is dear to me; with whom I prayed, and wept, and conversed, and went 'to the house of God in company;' and who have gone before me to the enjoyment of the Saviour, and

—"now walk with God,
High in salvation, and the climes of bliss."

I would renew with them the sympathies of Christian friendship; again mingle with them; again enjoy their society; not as I once did, when they were suffering and afflicted, but now, when '*former things are passed away;*' when '*God has wiped all tears from their eyes;*' when '*there is no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain.*"

"Some I remember and will ne'er forget;
My early friends, friends of my evil day;
Friends in my mirth, friends in my misery too,
Friends given by God in mercy and in love;
My counsellors, my comforters and guides,
My joy in grief, my second bliss in joy;
Companions of my young desires; in doubt
My oracles, my wings in high pursuit.

O! I remember, and will ne'er forget
Our meeting spots, our chosen sacred hours;
Our burning words, that uttered all the soul;
Our faces beaming with unearthly love;
Sorrow with sorrow sighing, hope with hope
Exulting, heart embracing heart entire.
These I remember, these selectest men;
And would their names record—but what avails
My mention of their names? before the throne,
They stand illustrious 'mong the loudest harps."

CHAPTER IX.

THE WRONG STEP.

"Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice;
Implore his aid—in his decision rest,
Secure, whate'er he gives, he gives the best."

It is impossible for us fully to know in what particular manner Providence interposes in human affairs, and influences the thoughts and counsels of men. But we are certain that such an overruling influence is exerted in the whole moral, as well as natural world; and we could not conceive of God acting as the governor of the universe, unless his government extend to every creature that exists, and to every event which occurs. No truth is more sensibly felt by the real Christian than this; and amidst all his trials and difficulties, none is the ground of such firm support, and the source of such rich consolation. It is his undoubted privilege to feel himself under the special conduct of God in things temporal and spiritual; and if he wait upon him with confidence and faith, he may expect the Divine hand interposing in his affairs, and directing him in the way of duty and safety, agreeably to the declaration, "A good man's steps are ordered by the Lord." He knows, however, that he has a part to act; and while the wicked follow only the maxims of human wisdom and worldly prudence, he is con-

cerned to have God going before him in every step, and pointing out his way clearly and distinctly; he would not, dare not, walk at random, sensible that the path of duty is the only path of safety and comfort. But at times it is most difficult to find this path, and to be sure that we hear God's voice, saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it."

These thoughts are suggested by the recollection of the following conversation on this subject, and the result that followed.

Learning that a member of my church was about taking a step which, if not evil in itself, would certainly lead to disastrous consequences—to his injury as a Christian and to the reproach of religion—I called upon him, tenderly to reason, kindly to remonstrate, and to lead him, if possible, to abandon his purpose. He had for some time been inattentive to his religious duties, neglectful of the society of his Christian brethren, and maintaining an unnecessary intercourse, even friendship, with the irreligious and profane. He had also more than once intimated that we were laying too much stress on *inward* religion; a point to which I resolved to allude, when an opportunity occurred. After conversing on other topics for a few minutes, the subject of religion was gradually introduced; reference was made to the evidences of piety, of its growth and decline.

I observed: "In examining ourselves on this point, and determining our own conduct, we should not be satisfied with the surface, but look within; the state and condition of the *heart* determine the character in the sight of God; and to *that* we should direct our principal attention, that our opinion of ourselves may conform, as far

as possible, to his judgment. We judge of others from external appearances; with their motives we have nothing to do; if their actions be good, we are led by Christian charity to suppose that they proceed from a good source; and if our judgment should be erroneous, society will suffer no serious injury from our opinion. Not so, however, with ourselves; we have a power over our own hearts that we have not over those of others; and if we err here, we make a mistake fatal to our souls. The conduct cannot be a true and infallible index of the state of the mind; for good actions, or those that are reputed good, may proceed from bad principles. The exhibition of his treasures to the ambassadors from Babylon was not so much the sin of Hezekiah, as the *motive* which prompted him—vanity and pride."

He immediately replied: "But are we not told, 'He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous?' and does not the Saviour expressly say, 'By their *fruits* ye shall know them?' "

"It is true that we are to know ourselves 'by our fruits,' but how are we to know that the fruit is good? Merely from a fair and beautiful exterior? There is much of that kind that is corrupt within. Indeed, if you were to act upon this principle, you might chance to find your death; for there are many poisonous trees which bear a beautiful and tempting fruit—pleasant to the eye and grateful to the taste, but destructive to the life. It is precisely so with moral fruit; it must be examined and known, whether it be sound within, and really as good as its appearance indicates."

After some further conversation on this subject, in which he was brought to acknowledge the necessity of

examining our motives as well as actions, he alluded to the step which he was about to take; hoped that he was influenced by good principles in the view that he had of it, and believed that it would tend essentially to his own benefit and that of his family.

"What means have you used to ascertain your duty?"

"I regard it as a call of Providence, and think that I shall be following its leadings."

"That expression, 'leadings of Providence,' which is so often heard, it seems to me is frequently misapprehended. Some suppose that, when in peculiar perplexity they are asking for direction, they are to look for a kind of *special* revelation; for such an expression of God's will as Abraham had, when commanded to leave his father's house, or as Jonah had, when he was ordered to preach at Nineveh; that when they are thinking of forming a new relation, engaging in a new employment, or removing to a new situation, *some one circumstance* is to determine the indication of the Divine will—that if that circumstance be properly interpreted, the will of God can be ascertained, but if misinterpreted, it is resisted. Such a view of the subject disqualifies the mind for the exercise of a proper judgment and sound discretion; fills with presumption men of a sanguine disposition, and leads them to regard their ardent wishes as their duty; and inspires with fear, and even terror, those of a melancholy temperament and scrupulous conscience. Is it scriptural? is it reasonable? is it not giving too much stress to a single circumstance, and making that, instead of the word of God, the rule of action? Providence, in itself, it appears to me, does not make known to us any thing, exclusive of the word of

Revelation; if it did, we could not say that the Scripture was our only guide and rule. By the expression, 'voice, or dictates of Providence,' we can mean nothing more than the language of God in his word, concerning our duty in the present situation in which we are placed —in affliction, teaching us to be humble and submissive—in prosperity, to be thankful—in temptation, to be watchful. When persons in a perplexed state are seeking for 'the will of God,' we are to understand by the expression, not that 'secret' will which has determined the event, which we are not to know; into which we are not permitted to intrude; for the knowledge of which even a *desire* is unwarrantable and unsafe; but that which is revealed in Scripture, which directs us how to act, what method to employ, and what course to pursue.—Rebecca made not this distinction in her conduct towards Isaac, when the blessing was conferred upon her son—and the consequence was awful and inexcusable sin. She knew that the blessing was intended by God for Jacob; and made the *purposes* of the Almighty, and not his *precepts*, the rule of her conduct; aimed to prevent those purposes from being defeated, and supposed that the necessity of the case fully authorized her action. But who can justify her conduct? She imposed upon her husband by means of his infirmity, and tempted her son to the commission of falsehood and deception. God approved not of her conduct, though he overruled it for the fulfilment of his purposes; far from sanctioning falsehood and fraud, he showed his displeasure both against her and Jacob, for their parts in the transaction."

"But what should Rebecca have done? Here was

her husband about to act contrary to the Divine intention; was she to be silent, and let him confer the blessing upon Esau?"

"Done! any thing but sin—nothing can justify *that*. She might have used lawful means for the attainment of her end; have reasoned the matter with Isaac; have meekly shown him the mistake which he was on the point of making; have reminded him of the revelation which God had given of his will, in this matter; and to persuasion and argument might have added strong faith and fervent prayer. Such conduct she should have used, instead of the crooked policy which she pursued; and by such means would have honoured God and her family, instead of bringing upon herself guilt, shame, and sorrow."

So good an opportunity at this moment occurred of presenting truths which I am sure would be applicable, that I proceeded—"Now, there are many in the world who make strong pretensions to morality and religion, who act upon the same principle as did Rebecca. Forgetting that the word of God is the only standard of duty, they, at times, argue and act as if they had the liberty of substituting some other rule; they seem to think that if the end in view be good, it is of no consequence by what means it may be attained. Nothing is more dangerous than this principle—the law of God must regulate the means; and whatever good comes from the evil, that evil cannot, on that account, be in the least degree excused.—But let us return to the subject we were discussing—the question is, *How, in a case of doubt and difficulty, are we to know the way which God seems to point out?* how, when entering on a new undertaking,

an important enterprise, are we to learn the indications of Divine approbation?"

"When the way is easy, may we not suppose it to be the path which Providence points out?"

"Not at all—for in such a way, he does not always—I may add, he does not *generally*, lead his people; but on the contrary, into difficult paths, to humble and prove them, and show them what is in their hearts. If the ease with which a thing may be accomplished is to be considered a providential intimation of God's will, we may justify the grossest crimes. Hazael knew from God that he was to be king of Syria in his master's room, and that master he easily and secretly dispatched; but who will say that the convenient opportunity thus afforded him of committing murder was a Divine intimation that he was thus to act? David, on the other hand, had a Divine promise that he should be king of Israel, and was anointed for this purpose. Under these circumstances, he once found Saul, in a defenceless state, in a cave; he could have easily slain him, and thus opened a way of immediate access to the throne; he was advised to do it by Abishai, who pronounced it a 'providential call'—'God hath delivered thine enemy into thy hand'—but David had more knowledge of his duty, and would not 'put forth his hand to hurt the Lord's anointed.'"

"May not the way of duty be discovered by strong impressions upon the mind?"

"I know that many place great confidence in such impressions, suppose that they come from God, and regard them as indications of his will. But we must not depend upon them, nor ever forget that they may come

from a bad, as well as a good source; that Satan can infuse thoughts into the mind, and, to gain his purpose, transform himself into an 'angel of light;' or that they may be the delusions of our own corrupt hearts. They who make them their rule and standard, who think that they must act thus and thus, because it is impressed upon their minds, are often deceived, and, in consequence of this undue reliance, become habitually unsteady in conduct, and unhappy in feeling. All impressions must be brought to the touchstone of Scripture; scrupulously tried by this only rule; if they agree with it, then they may be attended to, as an evidence that they come from God, for he never impresses any thing upon the mind which is not conformable to his word."

"May not our inclinations and desires be indicative of God's will?"

"Surely not—through the depravity of our hearts, our inclinations may be corrupt; we may have a propensity to that which sound discretion opposes, and against which conscience, if consulted, would remonstrate; and an aversion to that which the word and providence of God make our duty. Miserable indeed should we be, if we were to follow the bent of our inclinations. We have melancholy instances of this in Scripture. David, in the midst of his difficulties, and apprehensions that he would 'fall into the hands of Saul,' and perish, instead of consulting the oracle, followed his own inclinations, and escaped to 'the land of the Philistines.' Scarcely had he entered the court of Achish, before he was guilty of sinful equivocation; he was afterwards ordered to fight against Israel, and at last deprived of his property, and stripped of all his family.—Lot, too, was influenced by

his inclinations to choose the 'vale of Sodom,' because it 'was well watered, like the garden of the Lord;' and was afterwards induced to reside in the city; and you know the consequence, how his 'righteous soul was vexed from day to day by the unlawful deeds' of the inhabitants; how he was burned out; how he lost his property and his wife; and how his daughters—O! it would have been better if they had remained and perished in the flames.—Thus we prove the greatest enemies to ourselves when we follow only our inclinations and wishes. But though these are not to be the rule of our duty, still, in making a choice, we must consult our genius and capacity, and consider whether they be suitable to that course of life which we think of pursuing; whether we can succeed in that station which we have an idea of occupying; whether we have abilities to carry us through that labour which we have a thought of undertaking; and whether the issue will be for our credit, or incur the censure of rashness and presumption. With all these qualifications, inclination is no rule or standard of duty."

"How, then, (for as yet you have only spoken negatively,) are we to know the will of God, and learn our duty under doubtful providences?"

"Forget not the distinction already alluded to, which must be made between the *secret* and *revealed* will of God—a distinction recognized in Scripture: 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children'—the first are the rule of his own actions; the latter are our rule, and that only in which we are concerned. Some, in ancient times, had personal and special discoveries of the

Divine will made to them; as had Samuel about the choice of the person who was to be anointed king; as had David, when about to engage in the expedition against the Philistines at Keilah. But we have no Urim and Thummim, and can therefore expect no extraordinary revelations from God; we are confined to the ordinary standing rule of his written word. Although we have this complete volume of his will, yet we are often perplexed in our thoughts, and know not what course to take; afraid of displeasing God, if we take this step, or offending him if we take that—finding the inability to decide arising not merely from the difficulty of the case, and from our ignorance and inadvertence, but often from the providences themselves, which are no clear rule of duty; we say of them as Job did, 'Behold I go forward, but God is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him.'—We may, however, in general learn our duty, if we be faithful in the use of *all* the means which God has appointed; for we have many encouraging promises—'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he will direct thy paths'—'He will guide the meek in judgment, and teach his way'—'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep his covenant and his testimonies'—'What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.' These promises imply the habit of holy intercourse and humble communion with God; a deep sense of his providence governing all our affairs; a firm and practical belief in its extent to the most minute concern and incident. Prayer, then, is an important means; earnest, serious, submissive prayer to God, that he would

lead our thoughts by his Spirit into such a view of the directions of his word as to enable us to discern the path of duty; that he would so order affairs in his providence as to make our way clear upon the principles of an enlightened conscience and sound reason; that he would so incline our hearts as to make us ready to take such steps as will advance the Divine glory and promote our real good—'If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.' Such prayer may be accompanied with religious fastings, as was the the supplication of Ezra—'Then I proclaimed a fast at the river of Ahava that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to *seek of him a right way* for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.' We must be careful, however, lest we make our *frames* in prayer the rule of forming our judgment. I have known persons who have done this; who have supposed, to use their own expression, that if their hearts were 'enlarged' in pleading for an object, and if they were 'free' in the expression of their wants, it was a token of the favour of God, and that the contrary feelings were an indication of denial—with such views and expectations, they would regulate their actions. Nothing can be more uncertain and erroneous than this rule of judgment; nothing can expose us to more danger of being misled, and of having our faith shaken and our hope weakened by continual disappointment."

"Are there other means that you recommend should be used?"

"We should consult and search the word of God. Of how many may it be said: 'Ye do err, not knowing

the Scripture.' That, as David said, is 'a light to our feet;' it directs us to duties to be performed, and dangers to be avoided; it is the 'oracle' to be consulted in time of need, whose responses are easily heard, and from whose decision there is no appeal. 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against thee'—'A good understanding have all they that keep thy law.' We should diligently search the Scriptures, and learn whether there be any case there which is similar to our own, and that suits our condition; and if there be no analogous circumstance, there are principles which we can apply, upon which we may safely act, and from which we can derive light and conviction. It contains sufficient rules and directions for every part of conduct; and an enlarged acquaintance with it will be most useful in cases of doubt and perplexity, will enable those who study it with humility and prayer to select such instructions as will be adapted to their situation, and may at length lead them to a wise and enlightened decision."

"But I have known persons who have professed thus to read the Scriptures and pray to God, who evidently took a wrong step, and acted indiscreetly."

"Something more is necessary—to stop here would be acting presumptuously We must exercise our reason; for though we are commanded, 'Lean not unto thine own understanding,' yet we are not forbidden to exercise it. As rational and accountable beings we should examine and ponder the case in our minds; particularly observe all the circumstances; turn our thoughts in every direction; view our situation from every point; and then compare it with the rules of duty and prudence laid before us in Scripture. We should go

further; we should consult with judicious friends, to receive from their advice the light which we need, for in most cases, 'in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.' There are many who err here—they 'lean to *their own* understanding,' in preference to that of others who are far superior to them in capacity and knowledge, act contrary to the sentiments and wishes of the wise and good, and make fatal mistakes which affect them through life. How often have I seen this, particularly among the young, who have need of a guide, and who want that practical wisdom which is the effect of observation and experience. In the use of these means we must beware of prejudice, keep the mind honest and candid, unbiassed by passion, ready to know and practise duty. It is of no little consequence to have acquired a habit of Christian self-denial; if we be defective here, our judgment may be easily warped, and we may be like many who, under the idea of 'following the leadings of Providence,' hastily take the way of ease or inclination, instead of seriously studying, and deliberately adopting the only rule of duty. If after the use of these means, we be still in a state of suspense, then we must 'wait upon God;' we shall find it a difficult duty, for when our minds are fixed upon an object, our time is always ready, and hence we are apt to go before our guide. 'Tarry thou the Lord's leisure,' is most needful counsel; 'wait upon him, and keep his way,' is the great secret in this whole affair; 'wait upon the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart—wait, I say, upon the Lord.'"

I paused a little time before I made any application of the truth to his own case; finding him silent, and

indisposed to make objections, I continued: "You perceive, my friend, what is your duty in your present situation. I would affectionately say to you, if after due deliberation, serious consultation, and earnest prayer, you find the step which you think of taking unlawful and imprudent, reject it at once as contrary to the will of God. Determine always on the safest side, and if your mind scruple about the lawfulness of a thing, duty requires you to abstain from it without hesitation. 'Happy is the man that condemneth not himself in the thing he alloweth.' In this case, have a steady eye to God's glory; let this be the grand principle of your conduct, and the chief spring of all your actions. If this, and your spiritual good be supreme in your mind, it will be a safe and useful guide in your enquiries. Let the true fear of God be upon your heart; be really afraid of offending him, and then you may hope for his blessing, agreeably to his promise—'the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.' Lay to heart that excellent rule—'in all thy ways, acknowledge him'—acknowledge his word, by consulting it as your rule; his providence, by observing all its dealings; his wisdom, by implicit trust; his sovereignty, by cheerful acquiescence; his faithfulness, by humble reliance; his kindness, by ardent gratitude, 'and he will direct your path;' he will give you that 'wisdom which is profitable to direct,' an enlightened conscience and pious feelings; keep you from turning aside into the 'paths of error,' enable you to exercise sound reason and discretion, and dispose you to make a right choice, and to form a proper decision.

I left him with these reflections, intending to visit him again in a day or two, and to learn the result. I did

visit him; but found him wholly uninfluenced by what had been presented, and listening to other considerations without conviction, if not with indifference; plainly showing that he was bent upon the consummation of his purpose. He yielded to the seductions of irreligious acquaintance, instead of following the counsel of Christian friends, and entered into an unwise and rash engagement, which led to consequences the most lamentable and sinful. It is painful to recall those consequences, and to reflect upon scenes which made the rest of his life wretched, supplied matter for unceasing remorse, and convinced us that he never had any truly religious principle. He lives in my memory as a warning against the rejection of the word of God as a guide, and the formation of improper connexions with those who are not the friends of the Redeemer.

1. We learn the *sad consequences of not acknowledging God in our ways.* We perceive its effect in this departure from the ways of virtue, and the consequent misery that ensued—loss of reputation, privation of happiness, and injury to the cause of religion. But not only among the openly irreligious, and in self-deluded professors, do we observe it, but also, in a degree, among the truly pious. They feel not their entire dependence and the need of direction from above; they engage in new undertakings, make material changes, and enter on important enterprises without consulting the Divine providence or word; or if they attempt to "acknowledge God in their ways," they perform not their *whole* duty; to some parts they are attentive, in others they are deficient; they may "call upon his name," and consult the Scriptures, and yet not exercise caution, care, and dili-

gence; or they may vigorously use their own powers and efforts, and not seek "the wisdom which cometh from above." It is not surprising that they are so often unsuccessful. They may complain of Providence, and may complain of men; but the fault will be found to be entirely *their own*. To the want of "acknowledging God in all their ways," may be attributed that rash and precipitate conduct, that imprudence and self-ignorance, that want of self-possession and perseverance, which produced their disappointments.

2. A very common error is seen in the world—*much of what men call the leadings of Providence is their being led into temptation.* They neglect to "watch and pray," to offer the petition, "lead us not into temptation;" and God leaves them to "walk in the way of their heart, and the sight of their eyes;" he does not directly allure and incite them to sin, but permits them to rush into scenes of temptation. He permits it to develope their true character, and it has this effect. How many do we see who once acted firmly in resisting sin, carried away by new temptations on a change of circumstances; many who seemed humble in one station becoming proud and scornful in another; many who appeared upright in prosperity yielding to new trials in adversity; many who forgave their enemy when they had no power to revenge themselves, becoming violent and resentful the moment that enemy was within their grasp. For a while a man is not known, either by the world or by himself, to be what he really is; but bring him into a new situation of life which accords with his predominant disposition, which awakens certain latent qualities, and his true character fully appears. This

"leading into temptation" for the development of character, men often call the "leadings of Providence;" under this impression they court worldly honours, form sinful connexions, plunge into unnecessary cares, and ardently covet lucrative situations. If the Scripture approve a measure, and the way be distinctly opened, then we may walk in it with safety; but miserable is the condition of those who grasp at every opportunity to obtain riches and honours, and regard it as an "opening of Providence;" a path that has been prepared for them, and which they may securely pursue. What is this but presumptuously leaving the word of God, and endeavouring to soothe the conscience by means the most unlawful? Though there be no necessary connexion between temptation and sin, yet he who dreads not the one, fears not the other; he who goes deliberately into this contest, cannot expect to retire from it unhurt; he may not be utterly destroyed, but he may have marks and impressions that may long remain upon his imagination, a source of guilt and shame. How necessary, then, to exercise holy fear and self-distrust; to "flee from all appearance of evil;" to escape every temptation that can be avoided; and to expose ourselves to none without absolute necessity. How necessary to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation;" we may encounter it, but we must not "*enter into it*"—not voluntarily embrace, or have any inclination to comply with it—not throw ourselves into it, as a snare, and suffer from its influence. It is delightful to know that our spiritual interests will be advanced in proportion to the faithful resistance of temptation; that wherever there is a signal victory over

Satan and our corruptions, there will be a more than ordinary measure of Divine consolation.

3. *Many good Christians unnecessarily distress themselves*, because they followed not the path of duty; when they really performed all that was required in "acknowledging God in their ways." Because the path which they followed, led not to worldly prosperity and success, but to trials and disappointments, they reflect upon themselves for neglect of duty, conclude that they wandered into a forbidden way, and say with Gideon, "If God be with us, how cometh all this evil upon us?" But if they acted conscientiously, received the word of God as their guide, and aimed at his glory as their end, they have no cause for self-condemnation. Have not those who have been most honoured in the world, been prepared for it in the school of adversity? Was it not so with Moses, Job, Joseph, Jephtha, and thousands of others? God often leads his people into the path of sorrow for their usefulness and growth in grace, as well as for their higher enjoyment of spiritual comfort; his promise is, not "I will abundantly bless them with temporal prosperity," but "I will bring them through the fire, and they shall be refined, as gold and silver are tried, and they shall say, the Lord is my God." A saint will serve God with as much love and cheerfulness, when poor, despised and afflicted, as in the most prosperous condition; for one draught of the "river that maketh glad the city of our God above" can sweeten the bitterness of his cup; a single "taste" that "the Lord is good" is an earnest of the "fulness of joy" in heaven; a single leaf from "the tree of life" can refresh him with its fragrance, while he is passing through the wil-

derness. He is in a safer state than if he were enjoying the smiles of the world. The piety of David was chilled with prosperity; and of several of the kings of Judah, it may be said, that their religion was not so conspicuous on the throne as it was in their banishment. If the pleasure of taste is no indication of what is favourable for health, surely sense is much more incapable of judging what is useful for the soul. Prosperity may be regarded as happiness, while at that very moment it is the deadliest poison; and adversity, though a bitter potion, may be necessary for the continuance of spiritual life. Christians, then, should not be distressed if, when they are "acknowledging God in their ways," he should direct their steps into a path strewed with thorns and briars.

> "Affliction is the good man's shining scene;
> Prosperity conceals his brightest ray;
> As night to stars, woe lustre gives to man."

4. *It is most uncharitable to attribute the peculiar afflictions of others to the peculiar sins of which they have been guilty.* If, in the question, "what is the path of duty," the enquirer takes the path of error, pursues a course injurious to the interests of his soul, plainly forbidden by Scripture, deeply deplored by the pious, and manifestly injurious to the cause of Christ; then we may safely say that he "acknowledged" not "God in all his ways;" that he prayed not with a devout spirit, nor consulted the inspired word with diligence, nor exercised Christian prudence and discretion. But this is very different from the sentiment maintained and expressed by too many, that peculiar trials are proofs of peculiar guilt. If this life were all, and this world the scene of

final reward and punishment, then we might expect the righteous to be uniformly prosperous, and the wicked uniformly wretched. But the Scriptures, on the contrary, utter many declarations on the danger of prosperity, the advantages of affliction, and the reverses that shall take place at the bar of judgment. The history of Job teaches us that the severest afflictions are sent for a different purpose. In that history we are permitted to pass behind the scene, and observe the movements of Providence; to see who afflicts and for what reason; to hear the Divine Being pronouncing the highest encomium on the individual on whom the heaviest blow is about to fall—"My servant Job; a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil." The same truth is taught by our Saviour, in what he says of those on whom "the tower of Siloam fell." The language of God is, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." These trials are the visitations of a father's hand; steps in the process by which he is preparing his children for usefulness here, and glory hereafter. Never, then, should we conclude with Job's friends, that he who is much afflicted, is peculiarly wicked, and has incurred the anger of God. When a man's conscience can apply his afflictions to his own sins, it is reasonable that he should accept them as the punishment of his iniquity, and make them an argument for repentance; but we should never make them an occasion of censure and condemnation to others. "Happy is the man whom God correcteth."—"We call them happy"—not, who glitter, and triumph, and enjoy—but who "*endure*."

> "In this wide world, the fondest and the best
> Are the most tried, most troubled and distressed."

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